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CHRISTIAN MEDITATIONS;

OR

THE BELIEVER'S COMPANION

IN

SOLITUDE.

"My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord."—Psa. civ. 34.

"Jesus departed into a solitary place, and there prayed."—Mark i. 35.

"When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."—Matt. vi. 6.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"CHRISTIAN RETIREMENT" AND "CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE."

LONDON: HAMILTON, ADAMS, AND CO.;
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PREFACE.

This Volume is designed to be The Believer's Companion in Solitude.

The Meditations, interspersed with Hymns, chiefly original, are intended to promote serious reflections, silent aspirations to God, and self-examination; and thus, through the divine blessing, to lead the heart to God in Christ, as the only Foundation for a sinner's hope; and the only Fountain of a sinner's happiness. Should this important end, in any humble measure be attained, the glory will be His from whom all good proceeds.

Frequent retirement, and reading the Scriptures with meditation and prayer, are essential, through the power of the Spirit, to our growth in grace. The more we meditate on the things of God, as revealed in his holy word, the more will our minds be brought under their sanctifying influence. The religion of Christ, is the religion of the heart. It not only enlightens the understanding, but it purifies the affections.

The world will lose its fascinating power, and formality its deadening effect upon us, when once we come to a saving knowledge of Christ Crucified. We shall then use the world as not abusing it, and engage in outward forms of religion, as needful for *order*, but not as substitutes for *personal piety*. We shall then live in the

spirit of the vows and promises which were made in our names at our baptism, and thus evidence our new birth, by walking before God in newness of life.

In a spirit of Christian love, the Author of these Meditations has dwelt on the evil of self-deception; on our proneness to confound the sacramental sign with the thing signified; on the danger of our professing to know God, while in works we deny him; and, of resting in the form of godliness, while we deny the power thereof. Surely these subjects cannot be too frequently, nor too earnestly, enforced. If we diligently study our Bible, that only rule of faith and practice, we shall be preserved from those abounding errors which darken and pervert the truth. "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple."*

May the Saviour, who is love, impart his blessing to these Meditations on his Grace and Power, that he who writes, and they who read, may finally rejoice together in his kingdom of glory.

* Psa. cxix. 130.

Leeds, Jan. 1841.

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CHRISTIAN MEDITATIONS.

I.—COMMUNION WITH GOD.

"When I awake, I am still with thee."—Psa. cxxxix. 18.

Communion with God is the privilege of every true believer. He alone can approach the mercy-seat in the spirit of adoption, and enjoy a foretaste of heaven whilst journeying towards it. St. John felt all this happiness when he wrote: "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." Union to God, and communion with him through the Son of his love, is the source of every spiritual blessing. This exalted privilege can only be enjoyed by the holy followers of Jesus; for the Apostle adds, "*If we walk in the light*, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."—Yes, from *all our sins*, "though they be as scarlet,"—"though they be red like crimson," crying aloud for vengeance on our souls. But, "if we say we have fellowship with him and *walk in darkness*, we lie, and do not the truth;" for, "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."

How inseparably connected, in the word of God, is the privilege and the character of the true believer. Let none, then, dare to claim the privilege who are destitute of holiness, so emphatically denominated *light*. "God is light,"—"the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning."

—All his people are "the children of light and the children of the day." They have "no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." Oh! that the words of Christ may be living words in the hearts of all his people: "I am the Light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness." "While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light." All the people of God are "light in the Lord;"—but whilst in the body, they are renewed only *in part*, for thus writes St. John; "If we say that we have *no sin*, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Sin does not reign, though it rebels in the hearts of the redeemed; for "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." But, "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins;" for "the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world"—"that we might live through him."

All, who are united to Christ by faith,—all, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them—all, who rely simply and without reserve on the blood and righteousness of the Redeemer, through the Spirit, have fellowship with the Father and the Son. To them, God is a God that heareth prayer; he grants the requests of their lips. As they pour out their hearts before him, so he pours his blessings into their souls. He fills them with light, —he strengthens them with might, by his Spirit in the inner man;—he speaks peace through the blood of Jesus,—and accepts them, clothed in his righteousness; the divine image is formed in their souls, and they are made meet for the kingdom of glory. —Such is the character and experience of all who

are privileged to hold communion with the Father of spirits.—What honour can exceed that of being admitted into the presence-chamber of the King of kings,—of holding converse with Him, whom angels worship, and before whom devils tremble!—Is this the exalted privilege of the sons of men?—Oh! my soul, bless, for ever bless that precious Saviour, who procured all this, by his blood, for thee. O! thou adorable Jesus! enable me to make a full surrender of myself to thee. Didst thou leave the bosom of thy Father, to bleed and die for me, and shall I refuse to leave this vain empty world at thy sweet call? Alas! I should refuse and spurn thee too, did not thy love constrain me to obedience. Oh! blessed Redeemer, I would now hold holy Communion with thee. O! make me sincere. Give me a saving knowledge of myself. Show me my true character. Suffer me not to build on a false hope, lest I cherish a false peace. Send thy Holy Spirit into my heart, to enlighten my understanding, and mould my will to thine; that my affections may ever soar towards Thee.

Thy word of truth declares, that, "without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." Let me not deceive myself, O! thou Saviour of sinners, in a matter of such infinite importance as the salvation of my soul. Let me not fancy myself to be something, when I am nothing; or to suppose, that, because I am amongst *the called*, I shall therefore be found amongst *the chosen*; for thou hast thyself declared, "that many are called but few chosen."—O! give me the searching light of thy Spirit, that I may drag from its concealment, every lurking sin, and crucify every rebel lust.

O! my heavenly Father, wash me in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness; make me thy child by adoption and grace; enable me to cast away the filthy rags of my own righteousness, and to put on, by faith, the righteousness of thy dear Son.—Clothe me with humility. Keep me in a meek

and lowly frame. Give me a patient and contented spirit;—contented with such outward blessings as thou art pleased to bestow;—and patient under such afflictions as thou knowest to be needful for me. Make me thankful for all thy mercies. Let my heart overflow with unceasing praises for the unspeakable gift of the Lord Jesus. Here I am, O! my God, in thy presence. Look upon me in Christ for his sake, and through the merit of his blood, do away all my offences. Seal me with thy Spirit, and make me a partaker of thy love. Deliver me daily more and more from the power of indwelling sin; from the fiery assaults of Satan; from the love and friendship of the world; yea, from every thing that can alienate my heart from thee, or unfit me for thy heavenly kingdom.

Give me, blessed Lord, an increasing relish for spiritual exercises; for religious retirement; for the precious privilege of Communion with Thee. May the gospel of thy grace be as a well of salvation to my soul, from whence I may daily draw the water of life. May the Saviour be continually more precious in my sight, and more endeared to my heart. Transform me anew into his holy image, and seal me thine, for ever thine, a sinner saved by grace.

Without Christ, I can do nothing. All my fresh springs are in him. Great blessings are promised to faith, but faith is his gift. I cannot believe through any natural effort of my own. I may hear sermons, partake of the Lord's Supper, read my Bible, and pray much, but no means, however excellent, can of themselves work faith in my heart. Thou alone, Almighty Saviour, art the author and finisher of faith. Thy blessing must descend from on high; thy Holy Spirit must be imparted before those means can be rendered effectual, which thy wisdom hath ordained for the conversion of sinners, and the sanctification of thy people. Save me from resting in forms and ceremonies, which, without thy grace, are but as "clouds without water."

O! heavenly Father, whose love and grace are infinite, give me this precious faith, that I may hourly look to Christ as my great Atonement; flee to him as to a City of refuge; receive him as my Prophet, Priest, and King; rely upon him for the forgiveness of my sins, for righteousness to justify me in thy sight, for strength to enable me to perform duty, to follow after holiness, to encounter spiritual enemies, and to come off more than conqueror, till faith be lost in vision, and the cross be exchanged for the crown.

If David could say, under the comparatively dark dispensation under which he lived: "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee, my soul thirsteth for thee:"—O! that, enjoying the bright beams of gospel day, I may feel, blessed Jesus, earnest desires after thy presence, ardent longings after communion with thee. There is no happiness separate from thee. With thee is life. Unite me to thyself. I have daily to mourn over a cold heart. When I would do good, evil is present with me. Every day affords fresh proof that I am a fallen creature. The leprosy lies deep within; my whole nature is corrupt. Nothing but grace can rescue me from perdition. I want the three-fold blessings of redemption—pardon—peace—and purity. How cheering is the assurance of thine Apostle, that we have redemption through thy blood, even the forgiveness of sins. To this fountain I would continually resort, that through faith, I may wash and be clean. Then shall I enjoy thy presence here, and dwell with thee in glory everlasting.

There is a simplicity in the gospel method of salvation which none can rightly discover but those who are taught of God. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The nominal professor of Christianity cannot enter into the rich, yet simple revelations of redeeming grace. The humble soul, emptied *of self*, and filled with the

light of truth, can alone apprehend and feel the exquisitely delightful manifestations of that love which it free, full, sovereign, and eternal.

Man is always desirous to help himself; to work out a righteousness of his own, that he may have something whereof to glory: but, the gospel declares his total inability for this work, and points him, as a helpless, lost, guilty sinner, to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world; saying in accents of mercy:—"BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND THOU SHALT BE SAVED." "Only believe," was the word of our Saviour to the weeping father in the gospel. He was enabled to believe, and received an immediate blessing, in the restoration of his child. Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief. Turn away my eyes from all creature dependencies, from all self-confidence. Be thou all my hope and all my plea before the mercy-seat.

Whilst thousands around me are rejecting thy authority, neglecting thy salvation, or darkening thy counsel by words without knowledge, may I have grace, blessed Jesus, to wash in no other fountain but thy precious blood; to walk by no other light, than the truth of thy holy word; to journey heavenward in no other way, than by faith in thee; to feed my soul on nothing but thyself, the living bread from heaven; to desire no other joy, than that which springs from union to Thee and communion with Thee. Then shall I partake of the cup of salvation, and praise thee with the countless host of the redeemed in thy kingdom of glory.

Come, O my soul, retire a while,
  Withdraw thy thoughts from things below;
Beneath the Saviour's blissful smile,
  A heaven on earth, thou then shalt know.

Communion with thy God, how sweet!
  To feel his presence,—how divine!
O! make me for this blessing meet;
  My Saviour, make me ever thine.

While thousands seek their joy on earth,
Where thorns, in rich profusion, grow;
I long for joys of heavenly birth,
Which Jesus only can bestow.

Amid the tangled cares of life,
Amid the sorrows which abound,
Amid the errors, sins, and strife,
Which thickly cover nature's ground;

I would withdraw to silent shades,
And seek retirement with my God,
Where earth, with all its folly, fades,
Where I can leave affliction's load.

How precious this Communion, Lord;
With Thee is light, and peace, and joy;
I trust the promise of thy word,
Which earth and hell can ne'er destroy.

II.—THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS.

"Who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness?"—Exod. xv. 11.
"O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."—Psa. xcvi. 9.

If the external evidences of Christianity prove the truth of its being a divine revelation, how much more do the *internal* evidences attest its divine origin.—From the period of the Fall to the Prophet Malachi, promises and prophecies were proclaimed, types and ordinances were instituted, to foretell and prefigure the seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham, the Lamb of God, who, in the fulness of time, should take away the *sin* of the world.—Holiness is the grand characteristic of the gospel of Christ;—and all who are interested in its blessings are a holy people;—for the announcement to Joseph by the angel was: "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save *his people* from their *sins*." "Be ye holy, for I am

holy," is the command of God. "Be ye holy in all manner of conversation," is the apostolic injunction. Believers are described by St. Peter, as, "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that they should show forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light."

There is a beauty in holiness which as far surpasses the rude features of the world's morality, as the dazzling brightness of the sun outshines the glow-worm's light. The morality of the world consists in outward decency, and in rectitude of conduct towards our neighbour, whilst the heart is wholly estranged from God. Holiness has a special regard to God, and consists in *purity of heart*, and in a conformity to the divine image. This is what God demands. To this, a promise is annexed: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." This is what he works in believers by his Spirit; and without this, no man shall see the Lord. All religion is vain, if inward purity be wanting. No outward morality—no speculative knowledge of divine Truth,—no formal observance of religious duties—can ever be accepted as a substitute for holiness by Him who hath said: "My son, give me thy heart."

Oh! my soul, hast thou been born again? Has this divine change passed upon thee? Art thou renewed in righteousness and true holiness? Canst thou rejoice at the remembrance of God's holiness? Art thou labouring daily, through the Spirit, for greater purity of heart, more heavenly-mindedness, chasteness of affection, and rectitude of intention? Is love to God, thy principle of action? Is his glory, thy end and aim?

Oh! blessed Jesus, I have no strength in myself to do these things. Put forth thy saving, sanctifying power. Breathe, thou vivifying Spirit, breathe on the dry bones, and they shall live. Shine, thou Sun of Righteousness on my barren soul, that heavenly graces may blossom and bear fruit to thy praise. Angels

will then rejoice over another sinner that repenteth; and another jewel will be added to thy crown.

Give me grace to hate even the garment spotted by the flesh,* to loathe sin, as I should a garment in which is the plague of leprosy.† Preserve me from the lustings of carnal nature, from inordinate desires, irregular propensities, and *sinful thoughts*, those seeds in the soul, from whence spring so many poisonous weeds. Purify every imagination of the thoughts of my heart; give me, holy Saviour, the victory over myself, that every thought may be brought into captivity to a willing obedience to thee. Oh! may I daily worship Thee in the beauty of holiness, in spirit and in truth, that "with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, I may laud and magnify thy glorious name, evermore praising thee, and saying—Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts, heaven and earth are full of thy glory. Glory be to thee, O Lord most High."

I am now living in an enemy's country. My heart, like a besieged city, has to contend with foes without, and traitors within.—Watchfulness and prayer are the sentinels which guard the holy principle within; while circumspection watches the motions of the enemy without. If I sleep at my post, or relax in my vigilance, my soul would soon be overpowered by indwelling corruptions, and be vanquished by the powers of darkness.—How earnest is the exhortation of St. Peter: "Be sober, *be vigilant*; because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." How encouraging is his prayer: "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen."

* Jude 23. † Lev. xiii. 47, &c.

Self-examination, and prayer for divine illumination, are powerful auxiliaries in the Christian warfare. The Christian soldier must pray with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, that he may be endued with strength in the inner man. He must search into his heart, and learn to know himself, that he may not be surprised by the secret machinations of indwelling sin. Oh! how arduous is the life of the believer. The mere formalist knows nothing of his conflicts or his comforts. "See, then," saith St. Paul, "that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore, be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is."

Enable me, O Lord, to examine myself, whether I be in the faith; to prove my ownself. Many deceive themselves by not scrutinising their principles of action. Preserve me, thy unworthy servant, from this fatal neglect; lest, judging from external performances, and disregarding the motives from whence they proceed, I should be found, at last, to be only as reprobate silver in thy sight.

Am I in the faith? True saving faith is a living, loving principle in the heart. As life manifests itself by action, so does a living faith;—it works by love, it purifies the heart, it overcomes the world, it unites the soul to Christ, it apprehends his merits, and puts on his righteousness, it lives upon the promises, it realises celestial glories, it raises the believer above the cares of life, the sorrows of the world, and all the gloomy horrors of the grave; it resists sin, it applies the death of Christ as a powerful corrosive to eat out the gangrene of corrupted nature, it raises the dead soul, by virtue of the Saviour's resurrection, from the grave of spiritual death to newness of life, it enables the believer to walk with God, to worship him in the beauty of holiness, in the spirit of adoption, till he attain to the temple above, where his services and praises shall be perfected and eternal. Have I this precious faith, this faith of God's elect, which is

according to godliness? It is the gift of God; it is of the operation of the Spirit; Jesus is the author and finisher of it. O! blessed Trinity in unity, three persons in one Divine Essence, undivided, immutable, self-existent, and eternal; grant unto me this invaluable, indispensable blessing. Without it, I cannot please thee. Without it, I cannot approach unto thee with acceptance. If *in Christ*, I shall be precious in thy sight, for his dear sake who lived and died for me. If *out of Christ*, I shall be viewed as a vessel of wrath, as fuel for the everlasting burning! Delay not, then, blessed Lord, delay not, to impart this precious gift of grace—a justifying faith working by love. Speak the word only, and the blessing will descend. Work in me all the good pleasure of thy goodness, and the work of faith with power, that, going on from strength to strength, from conquering to conquer, I may rise superior to all my foes, glorify thee here in the beauty of holiness, and shine for ever as the sun in the kingdom of my Father.

III.—ASPIRATIONS AFTER HOLINESS.

"With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments."—Psa. cxix. 10.

Blessed Saviour! thou lover of my soul, give me grace to love thee. Never, oh! never let me forget what thou hast done for an unworthy sinner! Let me never forget thy bloody sweat, thy cross and passion, thy known and *unknown* agonies, when thou madest thy *soul* an offering for sin. Oh! that I had a heart to love thee with a supreme affection.

Come, blessed Spirit, shed abroad in my heart a Saviour's love, and that will kindle mine. Sit as a refiner's fire, as a purifier of silver, till the dross of sin be consumed, and thy holy image be reflected on my soul; yea, till I be made meet for the inheri-

tance of the saints in light. Give me a hatred of sin; preserve me from the wiles of Satan; deliver me from the workings of pride; save me from a worldly spirit, from a carnal mind, from sensualised affections.

Oh! thou fountain of all spiritual life, quicken my dead soul to act with energy in the cause of truth; give me a thirsting after holiness; strengthen my faith in the Redeemer's righteousness; my reliance on his power; my confidence in his grace; my hope in his promises; my assurance in his love. Fill me with holy joy, tranquillity, and peace. Take what thou wilt of earth away, only give me thy Blessed Self, and then, through grace, I shall sing in the darkest seasons,—triumph in death,—and shout hallelujah in glory.

Manifest thyself, Almighty Jesus, in these days of rebuke and blasphemy, when infidelity, popery, and anarchy are combining to overthrow thy church, that church, which thou hast purchased with thy blood, that "congregation of faithful men," however differing in name, whom thou hast chosen out of the world. Make bare thine arm as in the days of old. Stir up thy people to arm themselves for the combat, with the armour of thy providing for attack and defence;—with the girdle of truth; the breastplate of righteousness; the shield of faith; the helmet of salvation; the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; and with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, that they may be able to withstand in the evil day, and be faithful even unto death.

Preserve me, gracious Saviour, from philosophy falsely so called; from that wisdom which is from beneath, the poison of the old serpent. Alas! how is thy glorious plan of redemption perverted by men of corrupt minds, destitute of the truth. Preserve me from that specious charity, which would embrace in its arms every error, every false doctrine, every heresy; and from that infidel liberality, that boasted freedom of sentiment, which delights to darken the

clearest truths, and would root out of the world, if it were possible, the saving knowledge of thy Divinity, thine Atonement, and Intercession.

Thou Son of God, one with the Father, God over all, blessed for evermore, give me grace to build all my hopes of heaven on Thee, and Thee alone; to plead nothing before the Throne of offended Justice but thy blood and righteousness; to acknowledge my sinfulness with deep contrition; to loathe myself in thy sight and my own; and to praise thee by a life of loving obedience, for all that thou hast done and suffered for me the chief of sinners. Give me grace to know my weakness, my worthlessness, my wretchedness, my danger. Impart unto me thy Holy Spirit, that I may apprehend thy saving merits; that I may taste that thou art gracious; and be filled with all joy and peace in believing.

O, my soul! spread thy wants before the Lord, who is ever more ready to hear than thou art to pray. Lord hear my prayer, give hear to the voice of my supplication. I want to feel a greater delight in God. I want to look up to God, as my covenant God in Christ. I want a greater freedom of access to Him through the Son of his love. I want a more vigorous faith; a more spiritual understanding; a greater ardency of affection. My mind is dark; my spiritual feelings are benumbed; I seem to myself cold and lifeless! Lord quicken me according to thy word. I see many around me who live only to Thee. Many hearts are burning with love to Christ, and zeal for the salvation of perishing millions. I behold glorious Societies flourishing in our land. Like so many trees of life, they spread their fruitful boughs over the earth, while their leaves are for the healing of the nations. O, how awful! to be dark, in the midst of light;—cold in the midst of holy fire;—dead in the midst of life! Lord grant this blessing, grant that the fire of love may ever be burning on the altar of my heart, and never go out. O! what a precious gift is a new heart. This is the new covenant gift:—

"A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." What a gracious command: "My son, give me thine heart."

Blessed Lord, through thine abounding grace in Christ Jesus, grant this request of my lips. I want a *penitent* heart—a heart deeply humbled on account of sin. The sight of a crucified Jesus can melt my frozen heart, and cause the tear of penitence to flow, as water from the smitten rock. I want a *believing* heart, a heart filled with lively faith, and clear views of the power and grace of Christ; a faith, which can draw the healing virtue from the great Physician. O! the blessed power of faith, which can make the Saviour's merits mine, and place my sins on him! What joy, what peace, what sweet assurance does this economy of grace impart to the believing soul! I want a *loving* heart. God is love, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

"Happy the heart where graces reign,
And love inspires the breast."

O! that my heart were the abode of holy love; the Spirit thus witnessing with my spirit, that I am a child of God. How I long to feel the purifying influence of this heavenly grace, which assimilates the believer to the saints in glory. I want an *obedient* heart, the heart of a child, whereby, with filial confidence, I can cry—Abba, Father. As love is the spring of all holy obedience, so obedience is the truest test of love. All profession is vain without obedience to the will of God. The Redeemer's character was marked by obedience to his Father's will. His active obedience, and passive sufferings, proved his entire submission as man to the will of God; while, by his obedience unto death, he wrought out a righteousness to justify my guilty soul and to save me from death eternal. O, miracle of grace! the wonder of angels,—and the everlasting song of the redeemed. I want a *thankful* heart, a heart to praise my God with unceasing praise. A thankful heart is

a tuneful heart. Its melody is sweet in the ear of Eternal Love. It is a good thing to be thankful. The joy of the Lord is our strength. Humility will help forward the work of praise, while love will strike the chords of celestial harmony. This I indeed want —one of the richest gifts of grace, a penitent—believing—loving—obedient—thankful heart. For this will I never cease to pray, knowing that this is the will of God, even my sanctification.

Without the blessings flowing from the covenant of grace, through the precious blood of Christ, the greatest monarch, though surrounded by grandeur, is poor ; and possessing these blessings, his poorest subject, though encompassed with misery, is truly rich. This truth our blessed Lord has taught us in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus.

The blessings of the New Covenant are beyond all earthly price. Nothing could purchase them but the blood of Christ ; none can bestow them but the Friend of sinners, through the indwelling of his Holy Spirit. Lord look upon me *in Christ*, as a member of his mystical body, then will my soul be filled with thy goodness. In myself, I am nothing but sin and misery. In Christ, I have holiness and happiness, yea, all things and abound ; wisdom for my ignorance, righteousness for my guilt, sanctification for my pollution, redemption for my thraldom. Oh ! delay not, blessed Saviour, to shower down upon me, the abundance of thy grace. Thy work is salvation; let mine be praise. Thou knowest my heart, which, though hard and deceitful by nature, can be transformed by grace. Make me holy as thou art holy. If I be not a partaker of the divine nature (2 Pet. i. 4.) in all thy communicable perfections of love and mercy, faithfulness and truth, righteousness and holiness, I can never enjoy thy beatific presence in the realms of light. There, all is holiness, and there, all is happiness. Sin, which blighted the earthly, cannot blight the heavenly paradise. There, the tree of life for ever bears its celestial fruit ; no

cherubim, with his flaming sword, guards it from u
hallowed hands; for all the ransomed throng, havi
entered through the gates into the city, the N
Jerusalem, have right to the tree of life which is
the midst of the Paradise of God, and may eat, a
live for ever. Oh! that my portion may be THYSEL
for whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is no
upon earth I desire in comparison of thee.

Spirit of Holiness! descend and dwell,
Within a heart which panteth after thee;
Of living water, Thou the sacred Well,
Spring up, and rise into eternity.*

O! shed abroad thy love within my heart,
Fill all my soul with every pure desire!
Thyself, dear Lord, in showers of grace impart,
And kindle in me the celestial fire.

Reveal the Saviour to my longing soul;
His grace and beauty may I hourly see;
The force of pride and unbelief control,
And clothe me with his own humility.

Be every day devoted to thy fear;
Be every moment sacred to thy will;
Thy voice of mercy, hourly let me hear;
And all thy righteous purposes fulfil.

Then, when I draw towards earth's remoted bound
A weary pilgrim on life's dreary road,
Oh! may my soul with Christ my Lord be found,
And spring with triumph to his bless'd abode.

* John iv. 14.

IV.—MEDITATION AND PRAYER FOR THE SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

"I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways."—Psa. cxix. 15.

"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."—Psa. cxix. 18.

While passing through this benighted world, how happy is the man who can say with David: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." While surrounded with errors of every name, how privileged are we, of this highly favoured land, who possess the pure unadulterated Scriptures of truth. Oh! that the word of Christ may dwell in us richly in all wisdom. Then we shall know how to choose the good, and refuse the evil. We are too apt to draw our opinions from the writings of men, rather than from the word of God; and to range ourselves under certain theological leaders, rather than follow the mind and commands of Christ. Thus parties are formed in the Church; and charity expires on the field of battle.

Would I reach the Fountain of Truth, I must pass by all uninspired men, however venerated for antiquity; however renowned for wisdom and piety. I must pass by Milner, Scott, and Simeon,—Owen, Watts, and Doddridge,—Hooker, Hopkins, and Reynolds,—Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer,—Luther, Melancthon, and Calvin,—Tertullian, Chrysostom, and Basil,—Clement, Polycarp, and Ignatius,—yea, the whole army of saints and martyrs, till I come to the Light of the World, the adorable Jesus, whose word is the Truth; and to his inspired Apostles, who were guided by the Holy Spirit into all truth, and whose writings alone contain the mind and will of God under the gospel dispensation.

Here I arrive at the source of truth. Here I find the true Rule of Faith. Here all is luminous, purifying, and consoling. Here I come to the Promiser of light and guidance. "If *any man* will do his will, he *shall know* of the doctrine, whether it be of God." Here I am told the happy result of searching the Scriptures. The Bereans "were more noble than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and *searched the Scriptures daily*, whether those things were so; therefore many of them believed." They did not receive the declarations even of Paul and Silas with *a blind submission*, but searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things which they spake, were so, that is, in accordance with the predictions of the Prophets. This search was not displeasing to God, for faith is his gift, and many of them believed. The beloved Apostle has commanded us to guard against being entrapped by *error:* "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but *try the spirits* whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world." Our blessed Lord has given us the same caution with respect to their *character:* "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."

How are we to *try the spirits?* Isaiah tells us: "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this rule, it is because there is no light in them." How are we to form our judgment of character? Our Lord has taught us: "Ye shall know them by their fruits." "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit; wherefore, by their fruits ye shall know them."

The judicious Hooker has forcibly expressed his opinion on the subject of Tradition: "When the question is, whether we be now to seek for any revealed law of God otherwhere than only in the sacred Scripture; whether we do now stand bound in the sight of God, to yield to traditions urged by the Church

of Rome the same obedience and reverence we do to his written law, honouring equally and adoring both as divine? Our answer is,—No. They that so earnestly plead for the authority of Tradition, as if nothing were more safely conveyed than that which spreadeth itself by report, and descendeth by relation of former generations unto the ages that succeed, are not all of them (surely a miracle it were if they should be) so simple as thus to persuade themselves; howsoever, if the simple were so persuaded, they could not be content perhaps very well to enjoy the benefit as they account it, of that common error. What hazard the truth is in when it passeth through the hands of report, how *maimed* and *deformed* it becometh, they are not, they cannot possibly be ignorant. Let them that are indeed of this mind, consider but only that little of things divine which the heathens have in such sort received. How miserable had the state of the Church of God been long ere this, if, wanting the sacred Scripture, we had no record of his laws but only the memory of man receiving the same by report and relation from his predecessors."

O! how delightful it is to open the Book of God, with the full assurance that *there* all is TRUTH; pure, unadulterated Truth:—What, then, must we think of that Church, which would debar her members of this inestimable gift of God?

Time was, when the Holy Bible, like a prisoner, was fastened by a *chain* in our Parochial Churches; but now it is furnished with *wings*, and flies from east to west, from north to south, proclaiming the gospel of the grace of God.

This blessing may be withdrawn if we slight or abuse it. Dark clouds are gathering around us. Oh! that we may be found faithful; that we may have an humble, teachable spirit; a prayerful frame of mind, to receive the revelations of God's will with an earnest desire, through the Spirit, to live under its influence. Then will Christ be formed in us the

Hope of glory, then we shall be prepared to dwell with him in glory everlasting.

When I read the blessed Scriptures of truth, what amazing love and mercy do I find contained in one single promise! How inconceivably great, then, is the whole treasure which lies concealed in this sacred volume. Like the rich ore in the mountain, the most precious lies the deepest, but when found it well repays the labourer's toil. When I read the writings of pious men, whether ancient or modern, I must always peruse them with caution, and bring them to the test of Scripture. Tradition is useful for establishing a fact; but must not be exalted into the tribunal of Scripture; for Christ himself hath declared, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."*

Those who read the Scriptures with little attention, receive little comfort from them. But the Christian, who not only reads, but marks, learns, and inwardly digests them; who peruses them with prayer for God's Spirit to understand them, and then meditates upon them day and night, finds them a well of salvation; they become his delight and his counsellor, and by them he is made wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Lord! open my understanding that I may understand the Scriptures; that I may know thee the only true God as therein revealed; and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent, as my Sacrifice, my Righteousness, my Example, to know whom is life eternal.

Teach me to know myself, the vileness of my nature, the depravity of my heart, the sinfulness of my life, that I may fly out of myself to Jesus, for pardon, peace, and holiness.

Teach me to know, by blessed experience, the work of the divine Spirit, that being convinced of sin, all pride and self-love may die in me; and being led to the cross of my Redeemer, love and gratitude

* John xii. 48.

may fill my soul, and invigorate my endeavours to please thee.

Teach me to know the vanity and emptiness of the world; its insufficiency to gratify the desires, or satisfy the longings of the new-born soul; yea, its perfect inability to make its most devoted votaries happy.

Teach me to number my days, to estimate their shortness and uncertainty, that I may not procrastinate in the great work of salvation. When I think of a flood, a sleep, a flower, I am reminded of the fleeting life of man.* Thy word is full of warnings, cautions, and admonitions, to awaken my solicitude about eternal things.

Teach me to value the bliss of heaven above all earthly joys;—to dread the torments of hell above all earthly sorrow. Alas! how often do the pleasures of sense blunt our sensibilities to those things which are above; while the troubles of time obliterate from our minds the misery which awaits the impenitent and unbelieving.

Teach me, O blessed Saviour, cheerfully to refuse the pleasures of sin, which end in everlasting torment; and cheerfully to endure those trials, for thy sake and the gospel's, which terminate in endless glory.

O! my soul, remember where thou art, in a world of sinners, thyself a sinner. Time is flying with rapid wing. Eternity, with all its awful realities will soon open before thee. Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation; to-morrow, the door of mercy may be closed; to-morrow, thy state may be everlastingly fixed. To-morrow?—Oh! my soul, boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou canst not tell what a day may bring forth. Whilst thou art forming schemes of happiness for many years, the word may have passed the lip of the Eternal: "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." Call together thy scattered powers, which have too

* Psa. xc. 5, 6.

long wandered amidst the vanities of time. Let all thy faculties be brought to ponder well the solemn truths of God. Meditate on everlasting things. Soon must thy old companion, this mortal body, be consigned to the tomb, there to moulder into dust, until the all-awakening trumpet of the archangel shall rouse it from its earthly bed, to stand, re-united to thyself, before the judgment-seat of Christ. But, thou, my soul, canst never die. When the hour of dissolution comes, thou only changest thy habitation, remaining ever a conscious, thinking being. Thy powers, when freed from the burden of the flesh, will be more expanded, and more fitted for the extremes of bliss or pain. O then how important is the enquiry, —on what state shall I then enter?—in what habitation am I then to dwell?

Unfold the sacred volume, the Scriptures of the God of truth, and there thou readest, that the righteous shall go into life eternal, but the wicked into everlasting fire. Who then are the righteous, and who are the wicked? This, thou learnest also from these sacred oracles.

All, who live in open, wilful sin, despising, rejecting, or neglecting the gospel of Jesus Christ; —all, who will not have Christ to reign over them; —all, who love the world more than God; who hate holiness, and die in this impenitent, unbelieving state, are denominated *wicked*, and shall have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.

All, who come, as lost sinners to Jesus Christ, weary of the service, and heavy laden with the guilt of sin; all, who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness; all, who are seeking with earnest solicitude, for the pardon of sin, for peace with God, for purity of heart, through the blood and Spirit of Christ; all, who through the power of the Holy Ghost, resist the devil, crucify the flesh, renounce the world, live by faith in the Son of God, esteem him precious and altogether lovely, labour to win

souls to Christ, by prayer, by influence, and by example, are called *righteous* in the sacred Scriptures, and shall go into life eternal.

Now, oh! my soul, behold the truth spread before thee. The countless millions which people the earth are divided only into *two classes* by Him who searcheth the heart; the righteous and the wicked, saints and sinners, the sheep and the goats. Two states are prepared for them in the world to come—heaven and hell. No middle class is specified in the word of God; no middle state, no ideal purgatory is revealed. Here, the wheat and the tares grow together; here, pain and pleasure, sin and holiness, are strangely intermixed; but there, in the eternal world, it will be for ever,—unmixed bliss, or unmixed woe, —unmixed evil, or unmixed holiness; joys unspeakable, or anguish beyond conception. To which of these classes do I belong? If I determine this, I shall know my future state.

O! thou eternal Spirit of Truth, enable me to examine myself as in thy sight; yea, do thou in mercy search me and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts, see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Have I true faith in Christ?

Simon Magus believed; but he was in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity, though by baptism a professing member of the visible Church. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. The Spirit of Christ dwells in him, to renew his soul in righteousness, to fill him with all goodness, and to prepare him, by a life of holiness on earth, for a life of happiness in heaven.

Have I put off the old man, with the deceitful lusts, and put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him? Is sin, in all its forms, odious in my eyes and hateful to my heart? With relentless hand, have I torn

the twining mischief from my bosom, and cherished with delight the blessed motions of the Spirit?

"They, that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." His servants are dead unto sin and alive unto righteousness. They serve God in all holy obedience, delighting to do his will.

Have I mortified the members of my body, and crucified all inordinate inclinations and desires? Do I never serve sin in the lust thereof? Can I freely part with it though it cost me much, the love of former friends, the esteem of the world, and the prospect of earthly gain? Do I esteem all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord?

The true believer can say—The world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world by the Cross of Christ. His heart is in heaven. He abideth in Christ, and Christ in him.

Have I renounced the world and all its sinful pleasures, its carnal company, its vain amusements? Are my friends, the friends of Jesus? Is He, the Hope, the Joy, the Treasure of my soul? Is my acceptance with the Father founded wholly on the righteousness of the Son? Disclaiming all merit in myself, have I received the gospel as a message of grace, a revelation of love to perishing sinners? Do I receive Christ into my heart by faith in all his saving offices of Prophet, Priest, and King? Do I dwell in Him, and He in me!

Am I clothed with humility?

The redeemed of the Lord are humble; they look at the rock from whence they were hewn, and beholding their honoured station, as lively stones in the spiritual temple, they exclaim, Lord! why me? When I find, on strict examination, that many former sins are subdued, and many once neglected graces attained, —can I say from the heart, by the grace of God I

am what I am; in the Lord alone have I righteousness and strength? Feeling the influence of holy love, am I pressing forwards in the path of holiness? Under the constraining love of Christ, am I running the race set before me, hastening with unwearied step towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus?

Do I bring forth the fruits of faith?

True faith is known, like a good tree, by its fruits. Do I cherish benevolent thoughts towards my fellow-creatures, as well as fellow-Christians? Is the conversion of sinners to Christ, the ardent desire of my soul? While preserved from the allurements of the world, can I pity and pray for those who are drawn away by them, as well as pardon those who speak reproachfully of me, because I dare not run with them to the same excess of riot; because I dare not be found in companies and places where *God is not*—where his Spirit does not preside, where his fear is not found?

What is my conduct with respect to relative duties?

To be really holy, I must be relatively holy; holy in all manner of conversation. In every situation of life, as a child, a husband, a father, a master, a subject, have I searched the word of God to know the duties required of me in these particular relations? Have I diligently and frequently examined myself by that holy standard, in order to obtain a more perfect knowledge of myself, both as respects my attainments and deficiencies? Do I daily implore forgiveness for all my short-comings, and seek for grace to amend what is wrong? Does my heart overflow with gratitude to the Giver of all good, if, in any humble measure, I have been enabled to grow in grace and in the knowledge of my God and Saviour Jesus Christ? Can I take encouragement from the experience of

divine mercy, to pray with greater boldness for more faith, more hope, more love, knowing, that to him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly? Am I content to be nothing, that Christ may be all in all? Are my thoughts continually running after God as my only resting-place in this ever-agitated world? Have I, in all sincerity, given my heart to God, and made a full surrender of myself to him? Have I submitted myself, through grace, to the righteousness of God, and received salvation as the gift of sovereign love, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus?

O! thou eternal God, who knowest the hearts of all the children of men, thou knowest that I desire to love thee. In mercy fulfil the desires of my heart, desires of thy own creating, for if I love thee, it is because thou hast *first* loved me. Pardon what is amiss,—restore what is defective; sanctify me wholly in body, soul, and spirit, and when the summons is given to call me hence, receive me to thyself, as an everlasting trophy of redeeming love.

V.—THE PROMISES OF GOD.

"All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God."—2 Cor. i. 20.

When I read the Scriptures, almost every page presents to my heart most precious promises, adapted to console and strengthen the mind under every trouble. But an important question arises: To whom do these promises belong? Has every one, who calls himself a Christian, a right to the comfort of them? Have I a right to appropriate them to myself? Lord enable me to deal faithfully with my own soul, lest I be deceived in one of the greatest of all concerns,—for what can be compared with ETERNAL SALVATION?

The Scriptures expressly declare, that all the promises of God, ALL, none excepted, in Christ are yea, and in him Amen. As in Jesus are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, so, in him, all the promises of God meet and unite as their proper centre. To be interested in these promises, I must be interested in the merits of Christ. But here another question naturally arises, a question of vast importance to the peace and comfort of my soul. How can I tell, when I am interested in the merits of my Redeemer, and so have a *scriptural right* to the enjoyment of the privileges and promises of the Gospel?

The Bible gives me clear information on this point also. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."—From hence I learn, that if I am without the Spirit of Christ, I am in a state of condemnation, and consequently can have no claim to the consolatory promises of the Gospel. As many and no more, as are led by the Spirit of God to the foot of the Cross, are the sons of God. And those only who have the Spirit of Christ, and therefore are *in Christ*, are heirs of glory.

But, if any man be in *Christ*, he is a *New Creature*; born from above; renewed in the spirit of his mind; made a temple of the Holy Ghost. This is the character of the redeemed as pourtrayed in the word of God; they are washed from their sins in the blood of Christ; justified by his righteousness, sanctified by his Spirit; a mansion of glory is prepared for them; they are the beloved of the Father, and to them belong all the promises of grace and mercy clustering on the Tree of Life.

Now, O! my soul, as in the presence of the Judge of quick and dead, before whose tribunal thou must shortly appear, bring all thy inmost thoughts to the touchstone of his word. See how far thy inward state approaches towards this exalted standard; whether thou bearest the infallible marks which designate

his chosen people. Alas! how many deceive themselves by false marks, and by an unscriptural standard, calling evil, good,—and good, evil; putting darkness, for light; and light, for darkness. Lord make me sincere and faithful to thee. The heart, I well know, by painful experience, is deceitful above all things. Pride, that old leaven of my fallen nature, is ever ready to interrupt these searchings of heart, by whispering, "all is well;" and making a merit of those actions, which, if brought to the test of truth, would overwhelm me with confusion.

Blessed Saviour! I desire to be thine; to follow thee with a single eye, and in simplicity of spirit; to be delivered from the bondage of corruption, from the power of sin, from unholy imaginations. Cause me to abound in every grace, that thou mayest be glorified; that I may be fitted to hold sweet converse with thee in solitude, apart from the noise and follies of the world. In the days of thy flesh, thou didst set thy disciples a bright example of holding communion with God. In thy word I read how thou wentest into a solitary place, and there prayed,* how thou didst withdraw into the wilderness, and prayed,† how thou continuedst all night in prayer, apart from thy disciples, on the lonely mountain.‡ May I love retirement *with Thee;* then I shall be able to say—I am not alone, for thou art with me. O manifest thyself to me at such seasons as thou dost not unto the world. Enable me to pluck the grapes of Eshcol, the sweet fruits of the promised land, the precious earnests of those richer fruits which grow in the paradise above. May I feel thy love, though I cannot find words to express its sweetness; yea, may I feel it flowing into my soul in daily increasing streams, till all sin is borne away, by the force of this resistless torrent.§

How glorious are thy promises, they are yea and Amen; they are like thyself, immutable. When

* Mark i. 35 † Luke v. 16. ‡ Matt. xiv. 23.
§ 2 Cor. v. 14.

the enemy comes in like a flood, and suggests:—thou art not the Lord's; oh! do thou in mercy lift up a standard against him. Let thy Spirit bring to my troubled mind some peace-restoring promise, to confirm my faith, to confound my foes, to strengthen my heart by his heavenly consolations. In sorrow, in sickness, and in death may I trust in thy faithfulness, repose on thy promises, and triumph through thy grace. Under every trial, like David, may I encourage myself in the Lord my God, and like him, be enabled to say—"Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." Thus, upheld by thy powerful arm, I shall pass over Jordan in peace; reach that happy shore, where angels will welcome my entrance into bliss; and where I shall enjoy the blessed fulfilment of thy promise: "Where I am, there shall also my servant be."*

The promises of God have a transforming efficacy through the power of the Holy Ghost; for "unto us," writes St. Peter, "are given exceeding great and precious promises, that by them we should be partakers of the divine nature." How wonderful!—worms of the earth, sinful dust and ashes, to be made partakers of the divine nature! Well may angels desire to look into these things. Man, fallen man, who lost the image of God, can now, through the Gospel of Christ, through the promises of his grace, be restored to the divine likeness. The Apostle might well call them exceeding great and precious promises,—precious, beyond all price; exceeding great, beyond all calculation.

Like St. Peter, his "beloved brother Paul," extolled the promises of God, not only as yea and Amen in Christ Jesus, but as purifying the hearts of believers through faith:—"What agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God: as God hath said: I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God,

* John xii. 26.

and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

The promises of God, when rightly embraced, never fail to quicken the speed of believers in their heavenly course. They then can run with patience the race that is set before them, looking into Jesus, while animated by the promises of his love. They are no longer slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience *inherit the promises*; treading in the footsteps of the flock, till they reach the heavenly fold. O! who can grasp this one thought—"inherit the promises;" yes, all the promises of life and salvation, of grace and glory, which are made to man, from Adam in Paradise, to the closing of the canon of Scripture by St. John? Every thing that is sublime, glorious, blissful, and holy is contained in the promises of God in Christ. To inherit the promises, is to inherit all things;* all that Christ has promised out of his fulness; and all that his people are capable of enjoying, when perfected in glory. Why, then, do we grovel like worms of the earth, when we should be mounting with wings as eagles—yea, soaring, as on seraph's wings, towards the realms of light?

"My soul cleaveth unto the dust, quicken me, O Lord, according to thy word." Put thy fear into my heart that I may not depart from thee. Thy ancient people, through unbelief, died in the wilderness; therefore, writes St. Paul to the Hebrew Christians, "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." May this warning of thy

* Rev. xxi. 7.

Apostle awaken my solicitude, and lead me to Thee for faith, to persevere under every discouragement; for hope, to animate my soul amidst every conflict; for love, to urge me forwards with unceasing energy, through every opposition from the world, the flesh, and the devil. Blessed Jesus! thyself the promised gift, and the promiser of eternal blessings, give me Thyself, and then, with thee, I shall inherit all things.

Sweet is the promise of thy grace,
So freely made to me;
When shall I end my earthly course,
And dwell, dear Lord, with thee?

Firm as a rock thy promise stands;
Thy Truth and Love endure;
O! may I love thy bless'd commands,
And make my calling sure.

The precept and the promise, Lord,
Thou hast so fitly joined,
That in the volume of thy grace,
They ever are combin'd.

Without the promise,—all is dark;
Without the precept,—vain!
Thy wisdom, by their union, gives
Thy people's richest gain.

O! may I love thy precepts more,
Thy promise more enjoy,
Till I shall reach the world of bliss,
Secure from sin's alloy.

There will the riches of thy grace,
Be like a boundless sea;
The Promise, and the Promiser,
My Portion ever be.

VI.—THE FALL OF MAN, AND HIS RECOVERY BY GRACE.

"O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help."—Hosea xiii. 9.

God is the Almighty Sovereign of the universe. He made all things by the word of his power; and for his pleasure they are and were created. Contemplating the Sovereignty of Jehovah, Solomon declared, "Whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it; and God doeth it, that man should fear before him." Nebuchadnezzar, when humbled under the mighty hand of God, confessed: "Whose dominion is an everlasting dominion." "All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what doest thou? Let all the earth, then, keep silence before Him. Let all the world stand in awe of Him who hath said: My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."

Those angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, God hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day, without one single ray of hope, or promise of forgiveness. Who dare deny their righteous condemnation,—their just punishment,—torments without mitigation, anguish without end? Their expulsion from heaven was not an act of arbitrary power. *They sinned*—therefore God spared them not, but cast them down to hell—into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

Man, created in the image of God, fell from his state of holiness and happiness, through the

deceitful wiles of the old serpent, Satan, the adversary of God and man. By the righteous judgment of Jehovah he was doomed to die. "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." None of the children of Adam have been exempted from this sentence, for "Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned;" none, but Enoch and Elijah, who were translated, that they should not see death, as types of the ascending Saviour. The Lord of life and glory, bowed his head, and died. His precious body was laid in the tomb, but death could not hold him; He saw no corruption; He burst the barrier of the grave, and rose triumphant, the Victor of death and hell. He is the resurrection and the life; whosoever believeth in him, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever believeth in him shall never die. Oh! glorious revelation of grace and mercy.

The moment our unhappy parents eat of the forbidden fruit, thus rebelling against the Sovereignty of Jehovah who had a right to *command*, while it was their duty and happiness to obey, they became *spiritually dead*. The Spirit of God forsook them; the image of God departed from them. Thus left of God, Satan made them his prey, and filled them with all unrighteousness. They were lost to every holy disposition, to all heavenly joy. They became the willing slaves of every sinful affection, of every hateful and hurtful lust. Such is man by nature. Such is the effect of the fall. Grace alone can counteract the evil, and produce a new creation. Do we find mankind, at this moment, different from the awful picture drawn by the pencil of Truth: "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually,"*—"evil from his youth."† Is not the world still filled with Cains, and Nimrods, yea, with giants in iniquity? Ah! then let not pride deny the

* Gen. vi. 5. † Gen. viii. 21.

solemn truth, that we are shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin; that we drink in iniquity like water, and have turned every one to his own way. O my soul, with deepest self-abasement acknowledge the justice of that sentence: "Thou shalt surely die."

The moment Adam sinned, he not only became a dying creature, "dying, thou shalt die;" he not only lost the image of his Creator, but he was every moment liable to *eternal death*. Nothing but the breath he drew, formed the barrier, slender indeed! between time and eternity, between earth and hell!

Angels sinned and fell to rise no more. Man sinned and fell, but oh! to grace how great a debtor, daily, I am constrained to be! the hand of mercy was stretched out, the voice of mercy was heard in sweetest accents:—the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head. From that moment a door of hope was opened; a ray of consolation beamed on the souls of our fallen parents. "The seed of the woman" was the Gospel sound—the glad tiding of great joy—the source of hope and peace. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, *made of a woman*, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons, and because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Thus writes the great Apostle to the Gentiles, when expatiating on the love and faithfulness of God.

Be deeply humbled, O my soul, while contemplating the Sovereignty of God. Let every unhallowed feeling be subdued, while looking into the deep profound.

In strictest justice, the Almighty might have left the whole human race to perish. He was therefore under no obligation to save any. The prohibition in Paradise was clear, the sentence definite: "Ye shall not eat of it, lest ye die." Our first parents did eat and died. Adam, being the federal head of the human race, all his posterity fell in him.

"*In Adam all die*," all, to the end of time. Thus, in strict justice, God is bound to save none; for all have sinned, and come short of his glory. But God is pleased to save some, therefore their salvation must be all of grace. None can claim this mercy as a *right*; all may sue for it as a *free gift*, through Jesus Christ. The offer of salvation is as extensive as the human race. The seed of the woman, the adorable Jesus, when he had wrought out a full redemption for us, commanded his Apostles just before his ascension into heaven, to go into *all the world*, and preach the Gospel *to every creature*; assuring all the fallen sons and daughters of Adam, that *whosoever* believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved, but that whosoever believeth not, shall be damned. Thus mercy and judgment, life and death, heaven and hell, were to be set forth by a preached Gospel, to animate the hopes and awaken the fears of the sons of men.

All men have not faith, therefore all men will not be saved; they reject the counsel of God against themselves; they refuse his offers of mercy; they will not accept Christ as their Saviour; they will not submit to him as their king: therefore, if they perish, they perish justly, and in the day of judgment they shall stand before the Lord of glory, speechless and self-condemned. Are any saved? it is through the grace of God—through the love of a dying Saviour, through the operation of the Holy Spirit producing faith in their hearts to lay hold of, and delight in, the ever precious Jesus.

Hast thou received this gift of grace, a saving faith in the adorable Redeemer? Then, cease not, O my soul, to extol the Giver of such distinguishing mercy. Why should the Sovereign of the universe deign to visit thee? Why should he pour this oil of grace, this unction from the Holy One, on thee? Why convert thee into a vessel of mercy fitted for the Master's use, while thousands around thee are vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction, through their

own wilful transgression? Why is this? Amazement seizes on my mind; love and praise should fill my heart. O why is this? Because he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy. I must resolve all into the sovereign will, the electing love, the free grace of the Great Jehovah. If I choose Him as my portion, it is because he hath first chosen me. If I love him, it is because he hath first loved me. If my heart is given to him, it is because he loved me and gave himself for me. If I am united to him, it is because he drew me with the bands of a man, with the cords of love, in fulfilment of his own most precious word: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee."

Many reject this blessed truth. The pride of man cannot bear this humiliating doctrine, so subversive of human merit. But what are its genuine effects? It humbles the sinner, it exalts the Saviour, and promotes holiness. That doctrine must be true, which places Christ on his throne, and the creature in the dust; which opposes the evil of sin, and delights in holiness. To all who are taught of God Christ is precious. He is their All, in All. They receive him as their Prophet, Priest, and King. They trust in him as their Atonement, Righteousness, and Advocate with the Father. They receive the gift of the Spirit through his intercession, to renew them after the divine image; to give them persevering grace; to make them conquerors over sin and Satan; to bring them in triumph into the realms of glory, and there to place them before the throne of the Eternal, as monuments of redeeming love.

O thou all-glorious Jehovah! guide me into all truth. Make me to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. Enable me to perceive and relish the Gospel of thy grace. Take away the scales of error and prejudice from the eyes of my understanding. Remove pride and the love

of sin from my heart. Give me grace deeply to bewail the corruption of my nature, as well as the transgressions of my life; to acknowledge thy justice in the destruction of sinners, as well as thy mercy in the glorification of thy people. Impress my soul with an abiding sense of the evil of sin; and with an increasing conviction of the beauty of holiness. Cause me to abound yet more and more in faith, and love, and every grace, till rising, as on seraph's wings, my liberated soul shall mount aloft to thine abode.

When I consider how soon the mind is disturbed by earthly cares, and delighted with worldly comforts; how soon the imagination is filled with scenes of promised pleasure; and how easily the affections are borne away on those painted bubbles which burst and vanish into air—I might be amazed that cares, and comforts, and pleasures of so superior a nature as those which the Gospel reveals, should make such little impression, yea, be even forgotten by myriads of professing Christians, did not the Bible unfold the awful truth.

The care of the soul, which is the one thing needful; a solicitude to obtain the favour of God through the atoning blood and all-prevailing intercession of the Lord Jesus; a thirsting for the consolations of the Spirit, which flow from communion with God through Christ, and which are the foretastes of those pleasures which are at his right hand for evermore, would be the daily desire of our hearts, if sin had not so entirely blinded the judgment, debased the affections, perverted the will, and turned the whole soul out of the way of holiness into the broad road of destruction.

This is the case, not with a part, but with the whole human race without exception. All flesh has corrupted its way before God; there is none righteous, no, not one. My heart bears its own sad testimony to this scriptural truth. Every thing within me bespeaks my condemnation. There is not one

spark of goodness in me. As a shipwrecked mariner, I must sink beneath the waves, if help be not afforded. But oh! how wonderful is the love of God against whom I have sinned. He stretches out his arm of mercy to save me from perishing. He speaks with melting kindness: "Thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help." Placed on the Rock of Ages, on Jesus, the sure Foundation, my soul is penetrated with gratitude whilst I listen to the gracious voice of my Redeemer:

"I, even I, am the Lord, and beside me there is no Saviour.

"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."

"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Such are the expressions of Infinite Love to encourage, and comfort, every lost sinner who is enabled by grace to lay hold upon Christ crucified as his hope of glory. Exclaim, O my soul, with the enraptured Prophet: "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us, he will subdue our iniquities, and thou will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."

Strike thy harp with David;—"Thou Lord art good and ready to forgive and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee." "I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart; and I will glorify thy name for evermore. For great is thy mercy towards me, and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell."

Join in the chorus of the saints around the throne: "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

VII.—THOUGHTS ON THE MYSTERY OF REDEMPTION.

"Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness."—1 Tim. iii. 16.

"The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law."—Deut. xxix. 29.

ALMIGHTY and everlasting Jehovah! clouds and darkness are round about thee. Many deep and unfathomable mysteries are contained in thy sacred word, yet on this my soul relies, that Thou O Lord art good; and that there is no unrighteousness in thee. In the day of judgment, thou wilt manifest thy Justice and Truth, and silence the accusations of thine enemies for ever. Let me not, O Lord, indulge a sinful curiosity in prying into those things which thou hast wisely concealed, but keep my soul as a weaned child. Make me wise unto salvation through faith in thy dear Son. Impart unto me, thy unworthy servant, the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of thee, that the word of Christ may dwell in me richly in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, producing in me the peaceable fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God.

In thy word I read, that man is born in sin, and therefore deserving of eternal death. In thy word I read—that Jesus died, and through the merit of his precious blood hath obtained eternal redemption for us. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies."

If it be asked,—Will all the fallen race of Adam enter into the Ark which mercy has provided? Alas! no.—As it was in the days of Noah, so it is now.

—The thoughtless, giddy, unbelieving world is as much occupied as the Antediluvians were, though warned by that preacher of righteousness, in eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage, smiling at the superstitious fears of the faithful, and feeling no concern about the threatened judgment. But they that *love the world* shall perish with the world.

"As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked."—"The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." How, then, comes it to pass that any are lost? Because they themselves *choose* the path of destruction, and *will* what is wrong, and persist in it; for sin consists in willing wrong, and the wages of sin is death. Men will not come to Christ, that they might have life; they will not have him to reign over them, therefore thus saith the Lord, "I will number you to the sword, and ye shall bow down to the slaughter: because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear; but did evil before mine eyes, and did *choose* that wherein I delighted not."*

But does not the Spirit of God graciously strive with sinners? Yes! he does strive with them, though they resist his heavenly motions, grieve him by their ingratitude, and finally quench the holy fire. This is evident from Gen. vi. 3.; "My Spirit shall not always *strive* with man, for that he also is flesh,"—corrupted and depraved. And with whom did he strive? With those who perished in the waters. Also from Nehem. ix. 30.; "Many years didst thou forbear them, and testified against them by thy Spirit in thy Prophets; yet would they not give ear: therefore gavest thou them into the hand of the people of the lands." Also from Isaiah lxiii. 10.; "They rebelled, and *vexed his Holy Spirit:* therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them." Also from the Acts vii. 51.; "Ye stiff-

* Isa. lxv. 12.

necked, and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always *resist the Holy Ghost:* as your fathers did, so do ye." Founded on the truth, St. Paul thus warns the Christian converts to whom he wrote:—"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."*—"Quench not the Spirit."†

How pathetically does the God of all grace expostulate with his fallen creatures: "Why will ye die, O house of Israel?" "O! that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments, then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea." "O! that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me and keep all my commandments, always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever." "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not."

Impressed with a deep sense of the blessedness of obedience, how solemnly, yet affectionately, does David charge his son Solomon: "And thou Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a *willing mind:* for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imagination of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever." Thus, all who perish, perish through wilful disobedience to the divine command. The sinner will be condemned, because he wilfully rejected the offers of mercy, so lovingly made to him, through Christ in the Gospel; because he stifled the convictions of the Spirit; because his will was uniformly opposed to the will of God. "This," said our Lord to Nicodemus, "is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, but men *loved* darkness rather than light, because their

* Ephes. iv. 30. † 1 Thess. v. 19.

deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." St. Paul declares: "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be:" "to be carnally-minded is death."

How, then, comes it to pass that any are saved? Because God is love. "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them." "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Thus the Holy Spirit overcomes the natural enmity of the will, and *influences* the sinner, by enlightening his understanding, to choose the way of life, opened to him through the Atonement of Christ, as revealed in the Gospel.

But, does the Spirit of God never *force* the will of the sinner to accept of salvation? No, never. The sinner is not *dragged* against his will to the foot of the Cross, but he is *drawn* thither through the sweet constraining power of love. "It is in the nature of the will, to will freely whatsoever it wills; for the will cannot be compelled." Compulsion and willingness are directly opposed to each other. God, therefore, in the conversion of sinners, acts upon them, by his grace, not as machines, but as rational creatures. If man chooses death, it is owing to his moral depravity, and the fault is entirely his own, because he wills it, as a free agent. "I have loved strangers, and after them I will go."* But if he chooses life, it is through the enlightening and awakening influences of the Spirit of God, who worketh in him to will and to do of his good pleasure. Yet, be it ever remembered, the *choice is his own*. It is

* Jer. ii. 25.

the voluntary act of the renewed will;—"When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek."* So, when Saul was converted, he cried out—"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" He was now made willing in the day of God's power to perform a cheerful and willing obedience.

If the view now taken of man's condition here, be scripturally correct, we must come to this conclusion: that man is a free agent, a responsible being, justly chargeable with the guilt of wilfully refusing the offers of divine mercy through Christ; and yet, that it is wholly of grace, if he become willing to accept of these offers and is finally saved.

Fallen man, if left to himself, would never love God; he would never come to God; his rebellious will would for ever oppose his approach to God. On this account it was, that the Redeemer said: "Ye *will not come to me* that ye might have life,"—and, "No man *can come unto me* except the Father who hath sent me *draw him*." "Him that *cometh unto me*, I will in no wise cast out."

Now, O my soul! praise the Lord, who hath showed thee in his word these precious truths. Use the means which he hath appointed for obtaining the blessings of salvation. Go to thy God through Jesus Christ. Beg earnestly the pardon of thy sins through his atoning blood. Implore the Spirit's aid to illuminate thy mind, to rectify thy will, to purify thy affections, to take away the serpent's enmity, the serpent's poison from thy heart, to guide thee into all truth, to give thee an unshaken faith in the Saviour, a delight in holiness, a cleaving unto God while life and being last.

But, O my soul, never dare to fathom with thy scanty line the deep things of God. While standing on the brink of the vast profound, unite with Paul in his self-abasing exclamation: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and know-

* Psa. xxvii. 8.

ledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out." And with David: "Thy judgments are a great deep." "Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known." Act upon this great truth, that the mysteries of redemption are revealed to us as *objects of faith*, not as subjects for doubtful disputation. They are made known to us for our salvation, not for the indulgence of unhallowed speculation. Vain man would be wise, but "the world by wisdom knew not God." "All thy children shall be taught of God and great shall be the peace of thy children," is the sweet promise made to the Church in every age. Eve wished to be wiser than infinite wisdom ordained, and her knowledge was dearly bought. Eden, with all its holiness and happiness, its peace and joy, was lost; a thorny wilderness, with cares and sorrows, disease and death, became her portion. Learn, then, O my soul! to bow with child-like submission before the Great Eternal. Though clouds and darkness veil his vast designs, Judgment and Justice form the basis of his throne:—

"Not angels that stand round the Lord
Can search his secret will,
Yet they perform his heavenly word,
And sing his praises still!"

Go, and do thou likewise, relying on Him who hath said, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

VIII.—SALVATION BY GRACE.

"By grace are ye saved."—Ephes. ii. 8.

Awful would have been the condition of fallen man, had he been left to work out his deliverance by the Covenant of works. The command,—Do this, and

live, as well as the threatening,—Transgress and die,—would have fast barred the door of hope against him. If his conformity to the divine law had been the only way of escape, despair would have made him its prey, and his doleful cry would have been: Farewell glory and happiness; farewell heaven for ever!

But, blessed be God, adored be his grace, he has not left us in this hopeless, helpless, and undone condition. By his Gospel he has revealed Himself to us as a just God and a Saviour; just, and yet the justifier of all who believe in Jesus. A way of escape is now opened to us through the Cross of Christ. A city of refuge is prepared to receive every trembling sinner who is pursued by the avenger of blood. Lord! I feel more and more that I am a sinner; yea, the chief of sinners. Every day brings fresh proof of my corruption, and lays me in the dust before thee. My just desert is everlasting burning; nothing less than this do I deserve; nothing more than this can I ever merit. Lord, my name is sinner; my nature is depravity; my heart is sin itself. What, then, can I hope for, when I thus contemplate myself, but repulsion from thy presence, when I appear before Thee seated on thy throne of Justice, surrounded by ten thousand t mes ten thousand pure and happy spirits. These angelic beings will acknowledge the justice of that sentence which frowns me into hell. O! my God, and is this indeed my dreadful state by nature? Alas! it is. But on this darkened cloud, whose bosom is filled with elements of destruction, shines the bow of mercy. In the midst of the earthquake, the whirlwind, and the fire, I hear a still small voice, speaking accents of grace, and, bidding me not to fear, only to believe. O! my soul, can this be true? Does mercy rejoice against judgment. Can God be gracious to the vilest of the vile, and yet remain unsullied in his holiness, uninjured in his justice? Can he receive sinners, and yet manifest his hatred against sin? Well may angels desire to look into these things.

Admire, O my soul, with never-ceasing delight, the glories of sovereign grace, the riches of redeeming love, the transcendent mercy of Almighty God! A Saviour is provided for thee, suited to thy every need. In Him, thou hast Wisdom, for thy ignorance; Strength, for thy weakness; Pardon, for thy sin: Righteousness, for thy guilt; Holiness, for thy pollution; Redemption, for thy bondage; Light, for thy darkness; Life in God, for thy death in sin; Hope of glory, for thy dread of hell. All this, and much, much more is Jesus to thee, if thou canst believe in Him.

What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits—how shall I show forth all his praise? O my soul, give God the Father, the glory of thy whole salvation, who thus freely devised this amazing plan of saving rebels from the wrath to come. Give God the Son, the glory of thy whole salvation, who so willingly submitted to meet in thy nature, the wrath of incensed Justice, who so patiently sustained for thee its accumulated vengeance, who so graciously turned it away, though it burned against thee to the lowest hell. Give God the Holy Ghost, the glory of thy whole salvation, who with such wonderful forbearance has, for years, been striving with thee to draw thy fugitive affections from forbidden objects, and place them on the precious Jesus; by whose almighty power, thou hast in some degree been brought to cleave unto, to love, rely upon, and trust in the ever-adored Saviour as thy only sacrifice for sin, thy only justifying righteousness, thy only Hope of glory. O! blessed Trinity in Unity, accept the praises of a poor unworthy sinner! Inflame my love, that I may praise thee better both in lip, and heart, and life, till I am translated to that world of joy where praise will be unceasing and eternal.

Come, thou Spirit of all grace and truth, come into my heart and take up thine abode there. O! come and dwell in me, unworthy as I am of such a

guest. Make me willing, I humbly beseech thee, to welcome thine approach, to receive thee with joy and gladness. Come into my heart, O thou *Earnest* of eternal blessings. Fill me with light and love. Cause the fruits of righteousness to abound in me, as a living branch in the true Vine. Come, and manifest thyself to my soul, Thou, who art the *Seal* of everlasting salvation. Let me bear the impress of thy holy nature. Be thou the inward *Witness*, testifying to my conscience that I am a child of God, enabling me to cry, Abba, Father.

From first to last salvation is all of grace, whether I consider the love of the Father in devising, the love of the Son in executing, or the love of the Spirit in applying, its blessings to my heart. How wonderful is the work of the Holy Ghost on the soul. His operations are remarkably declared by our Lord when about to leave his disciples. To them, he would be a COMFORTER; to the world, a CONVINCER of sin.

Meditate, O my soul, on these two characters of the divine Spirit, and adore that grace which so wonderfully seeks out the lost sinners of mankind. Before the promised Comforter could be given, it was expedient that Christ should go away, that he should be offered up as a sacrifice for sin, that he should triumph over the powers of darkness; that he should ascend to the Father. This blessed purchase of his blood is now poured out on the sons of men, and works in mercy upon his Church and on the world.

To the world he is the CONVINCER OF SIN. "When he is come," said Jesus, "he will reprove *the world* of sin,"—"because they believe not on me." All other sins are included in the sin of unbelief. It is the root from whence spring all those poisonous branches which have shed their hateful influence through every age. The fruit of this tree is death. All the miseries which have deluged the earth, sprang from unbelief. Eve disbelieved the

word of her Creator, and fell. All her children have trodden in her steps, and with her, have fallen into depths of woe. How pathetic is the cry of David: "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord." The Bible is full of the vials of wrath, poured out upon an apostate world, because of unbelief. The history of nations, is but the history of human crimes, and of human miseries, because of unbelief. All the sorrows of time, all the agonies of eternity, may be traced to the sin of unbelief. Great, then, is the work of the Spirit, to convince the world of sin, because, said the Saviour, they believe not on me.

When I look around me and contemplate the great mass of mankind, unbelief appears like a mighty ocean overspreading the human race. Pagans, Mahomedans, Jews, are all alike wrapped in the darkness of unbelief! That portion of the world, nominally Christian, is also covered with this blinding evil. Thousands, who have been baptized in the name of Christ, remain destitute of the Spirit of Christ.—Baptized infidels, baptized profligates, scandalise the Christian name, and form a stumbling-block to Jews and Gentiles. Thousands who profess that they know God, in works deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work, reprobate." The world is their idol; at its shrine they devote themselves. Present pleasures, present honours, present profits, are the things they covet, the things for which they toil, the things for which they expend their time, their talents, their all. The future is hid behind the thick mists of unbelief. They see not, nor long for, the pleasures which are at God's right hand; for the honour which cometh from God only; for the riches of his grace and glory. O! how great, how merciful is the work of the Spirit, when by his power, he enlightens the mind, touches the conscience, awakens the fears, and melts the heart of the worldling, convincing him of sin, of the deadly sin of UNBELIEF, in rejecting, despising, or neglecting, the SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD.

When unbelief is removed from the heart, the next operation of the Spirit is to reveal to the sinner, (now enlightened to perceive his danger) where help is to be found. He displays to him, in all its glory, that Righteousness which Christ wrought out for him by his obedience unto death, and arrayed in which, as in a garment of salvation, he can stand before the throne of Justice, accepted in the beloved. He then makes known to him for his encouragement and joy of faith, the triumphs of the Saviour, his victory over death and hell, and how the prince of this world is judged and overcome.

Such are the manifestations of the Spirit as promised by our Lord to the world:—"When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. Of sin, because they believe not on me. Of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye see me no more. Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." Oh adorable Redeemer, pity a world sunk in unbelief and sin. Stretch forth thine almighty arm. Rescue the perishing millions of mankind from sinking into the fiery abyss of hell. Manifest thyself as in the days of old, when thousands on the day of Pentecost were pricked in their heart, crying out, Men and brethren, what shall we do? who, gladly receiving the word preached by thine Apostle, confessing their sins, and professing their faith in thee, were baptised in thy name, and added to thy Church.

Now, let me meditate on those operations of the Spirit promised to the true disciples of Jesus. To them, the Holy Ghost is a COMFORTER. Delightful visitant! None but those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, who have found rest in believing, whose souls repose on the bosom of their beloved Saviour, can comprehend the felicity contained in this endearing name—*the Comforter.* Oh that my heart may daily enjoy the consoling influences of this celestial guest, in fulfilment of that promise—"He dwelleth with you, and shall be *in you.*"

He is also the Spirit of Truth. "When he is come, he will guide you into all truth." The Spirit guides us into the truth of all the promises, and of all the prophecies, which, centering in Christ, receive their full accomplishment in Him, for Christ is Himself THE TRUTH, and to know Him, is to know the truth. What a blessing, in the midst of abounding errors, to have such an unerring Guide.

The Spirit is the Glorifier of Jesus. "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." The Spirit glorifies Christ, when he reveals him to us in all the glory of his nature, as God manifest in the flesh; in the glory of his character, as our Mediator, Advocate, and Friend; in the glory of his offices, as our Prophet, Priest, and King; in the glory of his work, as our Redeemer and Saviour of the world. Oh that I may have grace to glorify him by receiving him into my heart by faith; by casting the burden of my sins upon him; by delighting to hold communion with him; by living wholly to him, who lived and died for me. Thrice happy they, who from the inward working of the Spirit, can say with St. Paul: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again."

How free was the Saviour's grace to the woman of Samaria: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."

"Jesus, the gift divine I know,
The gift divine I ask of thee;

That living water now bestow—
Thy Spirit and thyself, on me;
Thou, Lord, of life the fountain art
Now let me find thee in my heart.

Thee, let me drink, and thirst no more,
For drops of finite happiness;
Spring up, O Well, in heavenly power,
In streams of pure, perennial peace;
In joy, that none can take away,
In life, which shall for ever stay.

Father! on me the grace bestow,
Unblameable before thy sight,
Whence all the streams of mercy flow,
Mercy, thy own supreme delight;
To me, for Jesu's sake, impart,
And plant thy nature in my heart."

IX.—THE SUFFICIENCY OF DIVINE GRACE.

"My grace is sufficient for thee."—2 Cor. xii. 9.

SELF-KNOWLEDGE is an invaluable attainment. Without it, we resemble a vessel, driven during the midnight darkness, amidst rocks and quicksands, and which is every moment in danger of being dashed to pieces. Temptations and dangers surround us on every side. The stormy gusts of passion hurry us hither and thither; no wonder, then, while destitute of chart and compass, if we finally sink beneath the yawning waves.

Few men know themselves. This science can only be taught in the school of Christ. The Holy Spirit is the divine Teacher. He alone can make us savingly acquainted with ourselves. Unbelief and pride, the love of the world and carnal inclinations, blind the mind and corrupt the heart. Many, who

esteem themselves to be wise are very fools in God's estimation. Many, who call themselves righteous, are an abomination in his sight; for God seeth not as man seeth; man looketh at the outward appearance, but God looketh at the heart.

The teaching of the Holy Spirit is enlightening, convincing, purifying, and consoling. The first operation of the Spirit is LIGHT. When darkness was upon the face of the deep, God said, "Let there be light, and there was light." In the new creation, light springs up at the command of God. "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." This light, darting into the conscience, produces conviction of sin, by discovering, in all its hideousness, the monster that dwells within.—And,

> "Vice is a monster of such frightful mien,
> That to be hated needs but to be seen."

Sin becomes truly odious when viewed by the light of the Eternal Spirit. Its nature and effects are then known, and felt, and deplored.

This sight of ourselves is truly humbling. Self-abhorrence is the fruit of deep conviction. Nothing can lay the sinner in the dust of humiliation but the searching light of the Spirit. This candle of the Lord, shining into the inward parts, into the chambers of imagery, discovers the secret abominations which are practised there. Oh what hidden evils are made manifest by the light;—evils of every name, the progeny of hell. Self-love sickens at the view. Pride shrinks before the appalling spectacle.

This loathing of sin, this prostration of soul at the foot of the Cross, is accompanied, through the power of the Spirit, with a longing after inward purity. The soul, thus enlightened, convinced, and humbled, pants after that holiness which forms so essential a part of the new creation. Every thing which brings the soul into a nearer conformity to

ıe divine image is delighted in. Holy thoughts, fections, and desires are now the natural and spon- neous workings of the new-born soul. Once it as winter, cold, barren, and gloomy. Now it is e season of warmth, fruitfulness, and cheerfulness. The winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the)wers appear on the earth; the time of singing of rds is come, the voice of the turtle is heard in ır land; the fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, d the vines with the tender grape give a good ıell." Joy and peace, like the beauteous flowers of den, spring up and adorn the garden of the Lord. raise and thanksgiving with the voice of melody rm a concert in which angels join. Filled with atitude for such divine consolations, the believer us pours out his heart: "Awake, O north wind, d come thou south, blow upon my garden, that e spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved me into his garden and eat his pleasant fruit." sus the beloved one, answers to this call in accents love: "I am come into my garden, my sister, y spouse. I have gathered my myrrh and my ices." Oh! how delightful is this communion twixt Christ and his Church. Well may the liever say:—"My beloved is mine, and I am his." My beloved is the chiefest among ten thousand." He is altogether lovely."

Though reconciled to God, through Jesus Christ, t, like the Israelites of old, the believer must ıckle on his armour, and prepare for the conflict, ıowing that there still remains very much land to possessed.

> "Man's is laborious happiness at best,
> His joys are those of conquest, not of rest."

he enemy within, will unite with the enemies with- t, in contending with him every inch of the way Zion. Every day he will find that there are ghtings within, and fears without, to discourage s heart, to retard his steps, to make his soul

weary because of the way. But, as the soldier is not sent on a warfare at his own charge, so neither is the Christian warrior. Provision is made for him by the captain of his salvation, equal to his need:—

> "Jesus gives us in his word,
> Food and medicine, shield and sword."

Oh my soul, thou canst never sufficiently praise the Lord thy God for all his rich promises of protection and care. Many times thou art cast down and sad when the enemy oppresseth thee; many times thou tremblest, as if the power of the Prince of darkness would finally overcome thee. But be not dismayed. What readest thou in the word of Truth, for thy support and consolation?

"As thy days, so shall thy strength be."*

Dost thou ask, who spake these life-inspiring words? It was not the announcement of some mighty monarch, with his fleets and armies. It was not the proclamation of some great archangel whose powers surpass all human thought. Oh delightful truth! they are the words of Him who cannot lie; whose power is infinite; the Eternal Jehovah, the everlasting God, speaking through his servant Moses.

Jesus, who is God over all, blessed for evermore, is the Fountain of grace and mercy. He alone can give to his people the assurance of hope, because none but He is infinite in power, and infinite in grace. Hear his own declaration:

"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."†

"My grace is sufficient for thee."‡

Rejoice, O my soul, rejoice in this, that as none but Christ, who is God manifest in the flesh, could make this promise, so, He in faithfulness will assuredly fulfil it. Blessed promise indeed! how

* Deut. xxxiii. 25. † Matt. xxviii. 18.
‡ 2 Cor. xii. 9.

suitable to the wants and weaknesses, the fears and failings, of his people. Away, then, unbelieving fears, since Jesus hath said:—"My grace is sufficient for thee."

What have I now to do, but to go to the strong for strength, to go in the full assurance of faith and hope. But alas! my faith is weak, and too often wavering, when the wind of temptation blows upon it. Let me, then, without delay, plead this precious promise, founded on the truth, and sealed with the blood of Christ. With this promissory note in my hand, ever payable on demand, when presented by faith and prayer in the name of Jesus, I need not despond. I shall receive in return what will supply my every want out of the fulness which is in Christ Jesus. Out of his fulness, I shall receive, and grace for grace.

Am I tempted by small temptations? There is grace sufficient.

Am I assaulted by the hottest batteries of hell? There is grace sufficient.

Am I brought down into the vale of poverty? There is grace sufficient.

Am I raised to the dangerous heights of earthly grandeur? There is grace sufficient.

Am I treated as the offscouring of all things for Jesus' sake? There is grace sufficient.

Am I brought down to the chambers of death, racked with pain, and worn out by disease? Still there is grace sufficient.

My wants are many, but my supplies are infinite. Though millions of weak, tempted, persecuted, dying believers, have been invigorated in every age by this living water, yet its streams are undiminished; it still remains as it ever was,—GRACE SUFFICIENT:—sufficient to relieve the needy, to strengthen the weak, to pardon the guilty, to sanctify the unholy, to support the disconsolate, to comfort and save all, however vile and worthless, who sincerely, fervently, and perseveringly seek for it,

through faith in Christ. Oh for a stronger faith. Lord give me faith, and increase it. Let the dew of thy grace be ever falling on my soul, that I may blossom as the rose, that I may bear fruit to thy glory. Endue me with power to withstand the temptations that surround me. Enable me to fight the good fight of faith, to lay hold on eternal life. Give me persevering grace through Jesus, my only hope and stay. His grace is sufficient for me, by whose power I am rescued from the jaws of Satan, by whose blood I am cleansed from sin, by whose righteousness I am delivered from the curse of the law, and made an heir of glory. For his sake, O heavenly Father! strengthen me with strength in my soul, that I may be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus my Lord, till all my sins are subdued, Satan vanquished, and death swallowed up in victory. Then, in the glorious day of Christ's appearing, ten thousand times ten thousand voices will shout the triumphant hallelujah, praising, adoring, and blessing Him whose all-sufficient grace brought them to the realms of glory.

I will trust thy promise, Lord,
Rest in thine unchanging word,
Which so kindly says to me;
"As thy days, thy strength shall be."

Do I feel with guilt oppressed,
Rankling in my wounded breast?
Jesus sweetly calls to me;
'As thy days, thy strength shall be:

'I have borne thy sins alone,
For thy guilt I did atone,
Only now, believe in me,
As thy days, thy strength shall be.

'Ask of me the Spirit's power,
In the sad, and evil hour;
Then, my goodness thou shalt see,
As thy days, thy strength shall be.

'If o'erwhelmed with earthly care,
Banish unbelieving fear;
All my grace shall shelter thee,
As thy days, thy strength shall be.

'When the hour of death shall come,
Hasten to thy heavenly home,
Trusting on my word to thee,
As thy days, thy strength shall be.'

Lord, I bless thee for this grace,
As I run the heavenly race;
For this promise, rich and free,
"As thy days, thy strength shall be.

X.—THE DYING LOVE OF CHRIST.

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."—John x. 11.

THE parable of the good Shepherd is beautiful and affecting. The Jews could fully enter into the character of a shepherd. They were well acquainted with the cares and hazards of a pastoral life, in a country where beasts of prey so often invaded the fold.

This imagery was familiar to them from the Psalms of David and the writings of the Prophets.

"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake."* What a lovely picture of a shepherd and his flock, applied with such exquisite feeling by David to himself.

"Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest between

* Psa. xxiii. 1—3.

the cherubims, shine forth."* Such was the prayer of the Psalmist to the God of Israel, that he would graciously vouchsafe to his people a shepherd's care.

"Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I, even I, will both search my sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep."—"I will feed them in a good pasture." —"I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God. I will seek that which was lost."† What can be more gracious than this manifestation of the divine solicitude for his chosen people.

Jesus styles himself the good Shepherd, thus bearing the very character in which the God of Israel was revealed to his Church. Christ is Jehovah our Shepherd; the good Shepherd, who giveth his life for the sheep. His work of love is sweetly described by himself. "I am come to seek and to save that which was lost." "I know my sheep and am known of mine." "My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one." That heart must be harder than adamant, which can hear unmoved these gracious words from the lips of eternal love. O! that my heart may be melted and subdued by these expressions of infinite mercy. "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish." Blessed indeed are they who form a part of this redeemed flock, purchased by the blood of the good Shepherd.

The majesty and humiliation of Christ, his Godhead and Manhood, will form a subject for admiring contemplation, a theme for adoring praise, throughout the ages of eternity.

How am I lost when I begin to meditate on the

* Psa. lxxx. 1. † Ezek. xxxiv. 11—16.

grace of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty might be made rich. When I consider the dignity of his nature, one with the Father, by whom all things were made, and by whom all things consist; in whom I live, and move, and have my being:—when I contemplate his transcendent greatness, his infinite perfections, his immensity, his eternity:—when I reflect upon his unspeakable felicity, the overflowings of his love to myriads of angelic spirits who surround his throne, happy in his presence, and delighting to perform his will:—when I thus contemplate the ever-glorious Jesus, how am I lost in wonder and amaze, when, bending down to earth, I behold him an infant of days, lying in a manger, working as a carpenter, not having a place wherein to lay his head, mocked, scourged, spit upon, and at last, with every aggravation that malice could invent, nailed to a cross, and pierced with a spear!

Great indeed is the mystery of godliness.—"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us;" that Word which was with God, and was God. How can we escape, if we neglect so great salvation? In the fulness of time Christ came, emptying himself of all but *love*, that, as the good Shepherd, he might give his life for the sheep. He came to magnify the law, by bearing the curse for us, by shedding his blood for us. He came to make it honourable, by fulfilling all its requirements in our nature, and by his sinless obedience, even unto death, to work out a righteousness for us. He came to reconcile us unto God, to save us from going down to hell, to purify our corrupted nature, and to make us partakers of his everlasting glory.

Oh my soul, never cease to love and praise this all-gracious Redeemer, whose love is unspeakable, whose riches of grace are unsearchable, whose purchased blessings are eternal. View him in his glory with profoundest adoration. View him in his abase-

ment with deepest humiliation. Behold, by faith, the Lamb of God, that Lamb of God's providing, extended on the Tree, his body covered with bloody gore, his ears assailed with the scoffs of his executioners, his soul pierced with the sword of justice, which then awaked against the shepherd, against the man that is Jehovah's fellow.* Behold this sacred victim bleeding on the altar, as a sacrifice for thy sins, in dreadful conflict with the powers of darkness, groaning under the tremendous load of human guilt, which would have overwhelmed all except a GOD-INCARNATE. Behold him in this most pitiable condition, at this mysterious hour, forsaken by his heavenly Father: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" O doleful cry! O mysterious exclamation! Sin, what hast thou done, thou murderer of the Prince of life! For whom did Jesus bleed and die? for sinners, rebellious, ungrateful sinners; for me, the chief of sinners! O! my soul, melt into contrition at the foot of the Cross; behold what terrible effects thy vile apostacy has produced; and never cease to love this gracious Saviour, who, in boundless mercy and compassion, divested himself of his celestial glory, which he had with the Father before the world was, that he might take upon him the form of a servant, and being made in the likeness of man, might humble himself and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross!

O thou blessed Jesus, increase my faith, inflame my love, animate my hope, and stimulate my obedience, till my frail endeavours here below are perfected in heaven. Then shall I sing thy praise in purer strains; then shall I proclaim thy dying love with all the ransomed throng, who, on their golden harps, for ever strike the chord,—"*Worthy is the Lamb.*"

Ye men of the world, grasping after sordid gain; ye votaries of pleasure, dancing on the borders of destruction; ye aspiring souls, whose eyes are fixed upon the pinnacles of power; ye self-righteous pro-

* Zech. xiii. 7.

fessors, who make your works the sole foundation of your trust;—look at the suffering Jesus! You hear of his dying love, but you regard it not. Ah! for a moment listen to these moving words, *prophetically* issuing from the lips of the pale, tortured, agonised Redeemer, who, beholding your cold, your cruel indifference to his sorrows endured for your sakes, thus addresses you: "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger."*

O my soul, pray earnestly for those thoughtless, senseless beings, that the Lord the Spirit may smite every rocky heart, and cause the waters of godly sorrow to gush out in plenteous streams—thyself, the hardest rock of all!

Though Isaiah complained: "Lord, who hath believed our report." Though Paul reiterated the complaint,† still bright days are in reserve for the church of God. The prophecies glow with descriptions of glory. Language fails to depict the fulness of the blessings of the Gospel of Christ. How rich, how varied, are the promises made to Christ, for in him, they are all yea and amen, to the glory of God. As the stars in the firmament, they shine throughout the pages of Holy Writ. Faith, standing like Moses on the top of Pisgah, views the length and breadth of Immanuel's Land.

While mourning over the world's dreary map, as presented to thy view, cast thy eyes, O my soul, over the predicted realm of the glorified Messiah! "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.‡ "They shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord."§ "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."‖ "I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance,

* Lam. i. 12. † Rom. x. 16. ‡ Num. xiv. 21.
§ Jer. xxxi. 34. ‖ Isa. xi. 9.

and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."* "All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee."† "In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth."‡ "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end."§ "From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen saith the Lord of Hosts."‖ "Blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in: and so all Israel shall be saved."¶ "I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying; Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."** "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ."††

Truly, when this period arrives, it will be as life from the dead. The word is spoken, and cannot be reversed; for Jesus, who is the Truth, hath declared, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."—To his ancient Church, the Almighty declared: "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." And what is his counsel? —what is his pleasure? That the dying, risen, glorified Redeemer shall see his seed, shall prolong his days, shall see of the travail of his soul, shall be satisfied, shall justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities, shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul unto death, was numbered with the transgressors, bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.‡‡

* Psa. ii. 8. † Psa. xxii. 27. ‡ Psa. lxxii. 7, 8.
§ Isa. ix. 7. ‖ Mal. i. 11. ¶ Rom. xi. 25, 26.
** Rev. xix. 6. †† Rev. xi. 15. ‡‡ Isa. liii.

The Man of Sin, with his anti-christian power; the false Prophet, with his licentious code; the votaries of gods innumerable, with rites so bloody and obscene, shall fall before the Cross, shall vanish as the mist before the sun. The cry will then be heard—Babylon is fallen, is fallen, to rise no more. The Gentiles shall then cast their idols to the moles and to the bats.—The proud crescent of Mahomet shall then wane and disappear from beneath these heavens.—The Jews shall then embrace the crucified Messiah, as their long-expected king.—Then truth and righteousness will prevail. "In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of Hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them and seethe therein; and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of Hosts." Then will all who worship God, worship him in spirit and in truth. Jesus will reign, the universal King, for "the King of the whole earth shall he be called." Lord, hasten thy kingdom; take unto thee thy great power, till every heart shall crown thee Lord of all.

Soon must I quit this transitory scene;
Soon will the sweetest bonds of love dissolve!
To cease from man,—from earth my heart to wean,
Ere death o'ertake me, be my firm resolve.

Great God! how just are thy divine decrees;
How just the doom for man's rebellious sin;
The curse is uttered—and cold death shall seize
The race of Adam, till the world he win.

But Thou hast said—Thy right hand shall unbar
Sepulchral caverns through thy Spirit's power;
Lord, we confide, amid this doleful war,
On Thee, whose grace shall bring Redemption's hour.

O blessed Hope! triumphant Faith divine!
'T is Jesus calls us to partake his joy;

Christian advance—the Victory now is thine,
The conquering Saviour shall thy foe destroy.

He lives on high—we soon shall see his face,
Securely stationed on the heavenly plain;
Where, clad with beams of his reflected grace,
Our souls, with Jesus, shall for ever reign.

XI.—THE WILLINGNESS OF CHRIST TO RECEIVE SINNERS.

"Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."—John vi. 37.

Jesus is the great Teacher of heavenly wisdom, and simple-hearted believers are his disciples.—Renouncing their own wisdom, they sit, like Mary, at his feet, to hear the words of eternal life. Like her they have chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from them. Blessed Saviour, impress my heart with this great truth,—"*One thing is needful.*" May the salvation of my soul be the great object of my desire. Make me a simple-hearted believer. Let me not distract myself with things which are too high for me, but make me desirous for the sincere milk of the word, that I may grow thereby.

Thy word declares, that "all have sinned." O, give me grace with unfeigned contrition to acknowledge myself a sinner, deserving of everlasting banishment from thy presence. Thy word declares, that there is no other name given among men, whereby they can be saved, but thine only. May this precious name be ever my plea before the throne of Justice; my strong tower and castle of defence against the accusations of Satan, and the just demands of thy most righteous Law. Thou hast thyself declared—"Without me, ye can do nothing." Suffer me not to rely a single moment upon my own strength, which is perfect weakness, but to lean wholly on thine

almighty arm, which can alone uphold me amidst the dangers of the way, and conduct me in safety to the heavenly city.

Thy word, with a solemn distinctness speaks to my heart; "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Heavenly Father! impart unto me the Spirit of thy dear Son, that I may be born again of the Spirit; have thy Spirit dwelling in me, as the Spirit of adoption; and be made the temple of the Holy Ghost. Then will thy work of grace appear, by the transformation of my soul into thy image; by my separation from a world that lieth in wickedness; by my being turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God.

Preserve me from all inward impurity, and outward impiety. O, what a world of wickedness may be in my heart, while no glaring irregularity is visible in the life. Lord make me sincere. Let my love be without dissimilation; that so the internal purity of my heart may be evidenced by the external piety of my daily walk. Thus shall I be continually growing in faith, and love, and every grace, till grace be ripened into glory.

O my soul, pour out thy grateful praises to the God of thy salvation for this assurance of thine acceptance. "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Blessed Jesus! I come unto thee, drawn by the cords of redeeming love. I feel a void, an aching void within, which nothing but Thyself can fill. To thee do I now come for pardon and peace; for a new nature, spiritual affections, heavenly desires. Thou hast commanded me to come, and oh! how sweet, how endearing is thy call:—"Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Lo, I come! Through the gracious drawings of thy Spirit I approach thy bleeding Cross. Accept, blessed Lord, a vile, polluted sinner, whose soul is bowed down with sorrow under the load of sin, whose heart is panting, after thee, as the hart panteth after the

water brook. Lo, I come! and oh blessed as
rance, thou wilt in no wise cast me out. Thou
faithful who hast promised; thy word is truth, t
gracious word on which thou hast caused me to ho
"Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise
out."

I want, Almighty Saviour, a greater conform
to thee; to have more of thy Spirit; more of
temper and disposition of a new-born soul. W
I read of that power of faith, that fervency of l
that assurance of hope, that purity of heart, t
gentleness of manners, that simplicity of life, wh
distinguished many of the primitive Christians fr
the world around them, I long for a portion of t
spirit which dwelt in them, which caused them
adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all thi
Oh that I may be a follower of them who throu
faith and patience inherit the promises. Th
arm is not shortened; the fountain of thy lov
not dried up. Like thyself, it is eternal;—e
flowing, ever overflowing to bless a ruined wor
Thy mercy is from everlasting to everlasting, u
them that fear thee. Thy grace is, in every
sufficient for every coming sinner. Sufficient
convert the soul; sufficient to carry on the work
evangelical obedience; sufficient to complete
crown the whole with heavenly glory. Oh w
what joy will the top-stone be raised, with shoutin
Grace, grace unto it.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul; why
thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God,
I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my co
tenance, and my God."

God is the Lord by whom we escape de
Conversion is his work. Of myself I can do noth
—nothing that is pleasing in his sight, or profit
to my own soul. But, this moral inability form
excuse for sin. My inability to glorify God ar
from the corruption of my fallen nature; from
darkness of my understanding, the perverseness of

will, the depraved state of my affections; and therefore is justly deserving of eternal condemnation. All mankind come into the world in this helpless state. "The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good works to faith and calling upon God: wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will."* How gracious, then, are these words of Christ: "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." As if he had said: Come unto me, ye trembling sinners, be not afraid; I will give you all that you want; Come unto me, I will supply all your need out of my fulness; Come unto me, I will bless you with all spiritual blessings; I will strengthen you by my Spirit, I will comfort you with my promises; yea, I will never leave you, till I have done that which I have spoken to you of:—for, "where I am, there shall also my servant be."

O, Eternal God, I would praise thee for thine unspeakable mercy, for thy saving power, in applying the precious balm of the Covenant to my wounded conscience; I would bless thee for taking of the things of Christ and showing them unto me; for revealing Christ, as my all-sufficient Saviour; for drawing me to his Cross; for uniting me to him by faith as a branch in the true Vine; for making me a member of his *mystical* body; for working in my heart a holy longing after thee. Oh! how can I find words to speak all thy praise. But alas, in the midst of these mercies, I feel deeply humbled in thy sight. That law in my members which warreth against the law of my mind is continually opposing thy work of grace. When I would do good, evil is present with me. I am daily taught by painful experience that my heart is deceitful above all

* Article X.

things: that I cannot stand a moment except thou sustainest me; that I cannot take a single step towards heaven, but as thou guidest me. The whole work of my salvation is all thine own; and to Thee be ascribed the everlasting glory.

Under this feeling of impotency, how encouraging are thy words, O divine Redeemer—"Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Make me as willing to be saved, as thou art willing to save me.

The enmity of the carnal mind is ever directed against the work of Christ. The moralist, the formalist, the worldling, and the sensualist, are alike opposed to the humbling, purifying doctrines of the Cross. Holiness is offensive to the unrenewed mind. The more spiritual any religious exercise or book is, the more it is disliked. Give some truly scriptural volume to a lover of the world, and how will he receive it? After glancing his eyes over a few of its pages, he will lay it down with a contemptuous smile. He will pity the enthusiast who wrote it, and the enthusiast who admires it. Give him some newly-launched novel, some work replete with wit and humour, and he will devour its contents, even though it require the midnight oil to finish it. Here, all his heart is engaged,—all his passions are excited,—imagination adds wings to his flight, and, soaring into the regions of fancy, into the fairy-land of unreal life, he sinks into his slumbers, regardless whether he awake in time or in eternity!

O how awful is the state of every unconverted soul! "Death is the detector of the heart." When he knocks at the door, when he shakes his dart over the dismayed worldling, what terror seizes upon his mind! Some, indeed, have no bands in their death. Sin has so seared the conscience and hardened the heart. They go as the ox to the slaughter, insensible of the blow which awaits them. But, the moment the stroke is given, the moment Eternity is opened before them, O who can tell the horrors of the

disembodied spirit, while hurrying down into the dreadful abyss of everlasting woe? O thou perishing sinner, ere it be too late, while the door of mercy is open, while the voice of love is heard—listen to the Saviour's words,—pray for grace to obey his call: "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

With joyful steps, approach the Gospel sound,
Jesus the Lord invites you from his throne;
Salvation is proclaimed to all around,
The heavenly Shepherd claims you for his own.

Fear not ye trembling souls, whom sins oppress,
The Saviour's grace is boundless, rich, and free,
His bowels yearn o'er all your deep distress,
In tender love he cries:—Believe on me.

To seek and save our wretched guilty souls,
Down from the Father's bosom quick he flew:
See, at the Cross, his dying love controls
The powers of hell—and opens heaven for you.

Come, trembling sinner, let not fell despair
Detain thy footsteps from the bleeding Cross;
Come as thou art—His blood can make thee fair,
His endless love repay thy every loss.

Fill'd with the hope of everlasting joy,
A pilgrim journeying to the realms of bliss;
Thy Saviour's arm shall every foe destroy,
And kindly seal thy ransomed soul as His.

XII.—EARNEST DESIRES FOR CHRIST.

"With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early."—Isa. xxvi. 9.

Few persons are insensible to the happiness of friendship, though few, comparatively, possess a *real* friend. Worldly friendships are often little better than "confederacies in vice, and leagues in pleasure." Amidst refined society, where all the decencies of life are practised, and the finer sensibilities of the heart encouraged, friendship may assume its native character in a disinterested affection. But still the *lovely charm* is wanting. Christian friendship alone is the true panacea for human woes. Its kindly influence seems to make an almost Paradise regained. Cemented by the love of Christ, Christians possess the elements of true felicity. They have been described as *one soul in two bodies*, actuated by the same principle, walking by the same rule, and directed to the same end. Many requisites are needed to make a *Christian friend.* Selfishness is the bane of real friendship. It cannot live in such an atmosphere. Like tender plants, it thrives best in its native soil. A heart filled with the love of Christ, a mind clothed with humility, a spirit endued with that charity which seeketh not her own, is peculiarly fitted for the growth of Christian friendship. Here it expands its lovely flowers, and bears its precious fruits.

In the midst of this ever-changing, faithless world, there is a Friend that loveth at all times, a Brother that is born for adversity. Jesus is his precious name. Love is his endeared character. His faithfulness never fails. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. In the midst of disquietude, he can give rest. In the midst of sorrow, he can give comfort. In the midst of weakness, he can impart

strength. In the midst of embarrassment, he can give counsel. O! what a friend is this! Wherever we are, he is a friend at hand to cheer and succour. When we read his word, he speaks to us; when we pray, we speak to him. He is nigh to them that fear him, and he sheds his choicest gifts on those who love him. He dwells in them by his Spirit, and manifests himself to them, as he does not unto the world. Such a friend is Jesus to his redeemed people. What a lovely instance of holy friendship is presented to us in the family at Bethany. "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus;" and the Saviour was equally the object of their warmest love.

Earthly friends are indeed blessed, when Jesus is the friend of both; when each, who loves the other, is the object of the Saviour's love. An union such as this brings down a portion of heaven into the soul. A friendship such as this, like a calm and silent stream, meandering through some lonely glen, pursues its course in unobserved, but sweet retirement. The graces of the Spirit thrive like beauteous flowers in this delightful spot, till the happy souls, cemented by the love of Christ, exchange this earthly for a heavenly paradise.

There is no happiness but in Christ. He is the fountain of living water, the source from whence our every blessing flows.—O! my soul, never look for peace from the creature, never expect it from thyself. Jesus is the Prince of Peace. He hath made peace for us through the blood of his Cross. He alone, by his Spirit can speak peace to the troubled conscience. Through him, we have peace *with God*; and through him, we enjoy the peace *of God* which passeth all understanding.

Blessed Saviour! shed abroad thy love in my heart; fill me with joy and peace in believing. Wash my heart from wickedness; suffer no vain thoughts to lodge within me. Give me a single eye, a sincere love to thee, a supreme regard to all thy commandments. Preserve me, O Lord, from every false way,

from false views of thy Gospel, from false motives in my conduct. Enable me, O thou sin-bearing Saviour, to cast the burden of my sins upon thee; to confess them over thee, as the appointed sacrifice for the transgressions of thy people; and, oh! do thou bear them away into the land of everlasting forgetfulness.

I feel more and more convinced of this important truth, that to be happy, I must be holy. "There is no peace, saith my God to the wicked." "The wicked are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." Every page of the Bible proclaims this truth by precept and example. Universal experience attests the truth of this declaration, by the hourly miseries which sin produces. How can peace dwell in the heart, when the curse of God rests upon it? "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, but he blesseth the habitation of the just." When the Israelites were at peace with God, he blessed their basket and their store; when they rebelled, his curse consumed all that they had. The world may appear smiling and happy, but its appearances are deceitful. Many an aching heart is hid under a smiling face.

True peace descends from above. It is the celestial fruit of Paradise. The Holy Spirit alone can produce this blessedness in the soul; therefore, none can possess it, but the faithful in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit, in his sanctifying, comforting influences in the hearts of sinners, is the purchase of the Redeemer's blood. "Except I go," said Jesus, "the Comforter cannot come." The blessed Saviour went to his eternal glory by the way of the Cross; and thus satisfying the claims of Justice, he made a way for the exercise of mercy. Oh how wonderfully does mercy shine forth in this dark world. Like the material sun, it gives light, warmth, and fruitfulness to the soul. O thou divine Spirit, dispel the mists of ignorance from my mind; inflame my heart with holy love, and cause the fruits of righteousness to

abound in me. Hear my inward breathings after thee. Satisfy my longing desires after thy presence. Manifest thyself to my waiting soul, that I may be joyful in thee. "Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation; that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance."*

The eye is delighted, while ascending some lofty eminence, with the ever-varying beauties which are spread before it. What bounded the range of vision at the foot of the mountain is now lost in the vast expanse. So it is with the Christian traveller, when he leaves this narrow sphere of earth, and soars, by faith, into the world of glory. How wonderful is the power of faith. As the astronomer, by his telescope, discovers new worlds unseen by the natural eye: so the Christian, by faith, beholds a scene of glory which the natural man cannot discern. The book of God unfolds to his admiring sight these bright displays of glory, when viewed, by faith, through the illuminating power of the Holy Ghost. No wonder that his heart is filled with longing desires after immortality; with a daily thirsting after Christ. The midnight hour, and the early dawn, find him often engaged in this search after Christ. "With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early."† Present attainments are forgotten, while his eye is fixed on what still remains to be possessed. With the Apostle he can say: "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."‡

I long to be altogether conformed to the will of God; to be transformed into the lovely image of my Redeemer. I feel a constant uneasiness and restlessness of mind. Why should I grovel here below,

* Psa. cvi. 4, 5. † Isa. xxvi. 9. ‡ Phil. iii. 13, 14.

when Jesus calls me to him? Why rest in this vale of tears, when invited to ascend the Mount of God? I want a greater elevation of soul, a higher standard of excellence. My soul cleaveth unto the dust, when it should be soaring into the skies.

Man was originally created with expansive powers; with faculties capable of knowing, and of holding converse with the Deity. He was formed for immortality. Though now fallen, his children still retain some broken fragments of the once noble structure. The heart resembles a triangle which this round globe of earth can never fill; why else that restless discontent, those disappointed expectations so visible among the votaries of the world? They pant after the possession of ideal pleasures, and when possessed their zest is gone. New delights are panted after, which, when obtained, are equally evanescent. The enjoyments of earth, like the Aurora-Borealis, or the ignis-fatuus, are fugitive and deceptive.

O deliver me, blessed Jesus, from unbelief and discontent, from pride and selfishness, from fleshly lusts and carnal desires, from covetousness and an earthly mind, from formality and hypocrisy, from sinful compliances and the fear of man. Save me from myself, from the power of Satan, from an evil world.

O! impart unto me the unspeakably precious gift of thy ever-blessed Spirit, to be the Witness of my adoption, the Seal of my acceptance, the Earnest of future glory. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Hasten thy chariot wheels. Come in all thy salvation. Come in all the fulness of thy grace and power. O! delay not, blessed Saviour, to make my soul thy dwelling-place. I long, I look for thee. With thee is the fulness of joy, and in thy presence are pleasures for evermore. When I awake up after thy likeness I shall be satisfied with it. When standing before thy throne, with robes made white through thy cleansing blood, none, yes, none will praise thee with a louder song than I.

Jesus, to Thee my soul aspires,
Dear Object of my best desires;
With thee is life, and joy, and peace,
Without thee, all is bitterness.

Reveal thy glory to my soul,
O speak—and make a sinner whole;
Restore me to thine image, Lord,
Renew me through thy powerful word.

Come, blessed Saviour, to my heart,
Thy saving mercies there impart;
Preserve me from impending ill,
And let me ever do thy will.

If called to pass through swelling waves,
By furnace fierce, or yawning graves;
If duty's path lies through this way,
O from it, let me never stray.

Give me a holy courage, Lord,
A firm reliance on thy word;
Beneath thy banner I will fight,
When clad with thy all-conquering might.

Then, when the work of life is done,
The battle fought—the victory won,
Thy grace will give the victor's crown;
But all the glory is thy own.

XIII.—THE POWER OF GRACE, AND THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE DIVINE FAFOUR.

"The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him."—Deut. xxxiii. 12.

The promises of protection to the people of God are as numerous as they are consoling. When Abram returned from the slaughter of the kings, and naturally dreaded the fury of their successors, how graciously did the Almighty allay his fears "The

word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." When Jacob was oppressed by the covetousness of Laban, the Lord said unto him, "Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred, and I will be with thee." When Esau came with four hundred men to meet him, and Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed, the angel of the covenant blessed him, and dispelled his fears. When Joseph was unjustly cast into prison, the Lord was with him, and that which he did, he made it to prosper. Thus, in every age, the beloved of the Lord have dwelt in safety by him.

Moses, when blessing the tribes of Israel, for their comfort recorded the power of Jehovah:—"There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee, and shall say, Destroy them. Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew. Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee, and thou shalt tread upon their high places."

In his prayer, Moses also acknowledges the faithfulness of God:—"Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God."

How sweetly does David sing of the loving-kindness of the Lord. His heart seems too full for words to express his feelings: "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation,

and my high tower. I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies."

"In the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me: he shall set me upon a rock. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me, therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord." "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress, my God; in him will I trust."

Thousands can witness to this truth, that God is the refuge of his people—a present help in trouble. The eleventh chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews is a precious portion. There we have a host of worthies, who, being dead, yet speak to us through the oracles of God. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth; for they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country, and truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned, but now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city."* Who can read this beautiful record of patriarchal faith and patience, without the firm conviction, that, under all the varied scenes of life,—"the beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him."

O! what a sweet thing it is to be in the favour of God, to enjoy his peace, through the blood of Emmanuel; to have an assured interest in the righteousness of Christ; to see the way which leadeth unto

* Heb. xi. 13—16.

Zion, and to walk therein. What can be called happiness if this be not? This is, indeed, heaven begun below, and shall terminate in the enjoyment of heaven above. And is all this bliss, this glory, this grace, freely offered to me, the chief of sinners? Indeed it is. The voice of mercy speaks to me—the invitation is given to me by an ever-loving Saviour: "Come unto me, and I will give you rest;" "look unto me, and be saved." But how *can* I come? By his power. How *must* I come? Just as I am; for, if I tarry till I am better, I shall never come at all. Under a deep sense of my spiritual maladies I must come, as the lame, the blind, the dumb, and the maimed, came to the Great Physician in the days of his flesh.* The longer I keep from Jesus, the more inveterate will my disease become.† All human help is vain. Nothing can reach my case, or effect my cure, but the blood of my Emmanuel.

Behold me, then, at thy feet, all-gracious Saviour, an humble suppliant for pardoning and restoring grace. Pity me, O gentle Redeemer, thou who wilt never break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. Pity me, thou sympathising High Priest, who wast in all things tempted like as I am, though without sin. Stretch forth thine hand. Speak the powerful word, and thy servant shall be healed.

Blessed Spirit! give me faith to believe. All things are possible to him that believeth. Let me not doubt the Saviour's love, and willingness, and power to save, yea, even to the uttermost. Impart this living principle. I cannot believe through any force of reasoning. Thou, thou, alone, canst bestow this precious, special gift of faith. Come in thy divine energy, and make me from this hour, a real believer in Christ, a faithful follower of the Lamb.

Jesus was lifted up upon the Cross, that he might draw all men unto him. A free pardon is now proclaimed. All who repent and believe the Gospel shall be saved. To apprehend this by faith is the secret of

* Matt. xv. 30. † Mark. v. 26.

consolation. But some may ask: When can I know that I am among the redeemed? What assurance can I have that my name is written in the book of life? I answer—when thou art saved from thy sins —when the new name of *love* is written on thy heart.

If a blind man be restored to sight, will he not be conscious of it?—"This one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."*

If a man, groaning under a heavy burden, be delivered from it, will he not be sensible of the change? "I removed his shoulder from the burden: his hands were delivered from the pots."†

If a person, labouring under a painful disease, be healed of his malady, will he not experience the blessing? "Straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she *felt* in her body that she was *healed* of that plague."‡

If a man be confined in prison, and is again restored to liberty, will he remain in doubt respecting his deliverance? "When Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod."§

If reason and experience declare that we must distinguish between light and darkness; between slavery and freedom; between sickness and health; between imprisonment and liberty, why do we not distinguish between sin and holiness, between a state of condemnation and a state of acceptance with God?

If my blind eyes have been opened by divine grace to see my guilty, lost, and ruined condition by nature: if I have been enabled to view Jesus with the eye of faith as my Prophet, Priest, and King, as the Lord my Righteousness, as the Way of access to the Father: if I have beheld him in all these glorious offices and characters which he sustains in the covenant of grace for the redemption of his people, shall I not be conscious of it?

* John ix. 25. † Psa. lxxxi. 6. ‡ Mark v. 29.
§ Acts xii. 11.

If the load of guilt which oppressed my soul, and filled me with direful apprehensions of the wrath to come, has been removed through faith in the blood of Christ; and if, in consequence of this faith, I enjoy peace with God, and peace in my conscience, shall I not be sensible of this delightful change?

If the power of sin, which, like an acute disease, was hurrying my soul to the second death, and filling me with the poison of corruption, has been destroyed through the mighty power of God; and my soul be renewed in righteousness and true holiness, shall I not experience this blessed effect of the healthful spirit of his grace?

If, when tied and bound by the chain of my sins, and shut up in the prison of unbelief, I not only heard the voice of mercy bidding me come forth into the glorious liberty of the children of God, but have been led by the hand of the Spirit, to Jesus, the friend of sinners: can I remain in doubt, whether I have been delivered or no? Surely not.

Well, then, O my soul, hast thou experienced and felt these things? Be not deceived. It is one thing to know these truths from books and human teaching, and another to know and feel them from the inward teaching of the Holy Ghost. What practical effects do I experience from these truths? Do they make me more humble, thankful, and holy? Am I daily praying to Jesus for grace to love him more, and to evidence my love by an uniform obedience to his will? Am I seeking after a more simple dependence on his all-sufficient merits?

If these be the effects produced and witnessed in my soul, by an universal change in my temper, heart, and life, then, I may take the comfort of the promises made in Christ to penitent, believing sinners; then I may enjoy the foretaste of that glory which shall be revealed in all them that believe.

For the comfort of the Church in every age, St. John shows, that the knowledge of our salvation is attainable, when connected with childlike obedience

and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." "Ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins." "He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us."

"We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."

Had these been the words of an uninspired believer, would they not, by many, have been condemned as enthusiastic and presumptuous? Even in the face of these blessed declarations of St. John, so descriptive of his own state, and of those to whom he wrote, an inward experience of the love and faithfulness of Christ, combined with a humble assurance of an interest in his atonement, is still treated as the visionary dream of over-heated enthusiasts.

But infidelity and indifference can never remove the rock on which our hopes are fixed. He who enjoys the sunshine of spiritual joy, can never be persuaded that he is wrapped in midnight darkness. Job, in the twilight of divine revelation, could say: "I know that my Redeemer liveth."* Paul, in the blaze of Gospel day, could add:—"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day."† And John, to strengthen his testimony, declared—"Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that our joy may be full."‡ What precious words—*that our joy may be full.*

* Job. xix. 25. † 2 Tim. i. 12. ‡ 1 John i. 3, 4.

Can it then be unscriptural or presumptuous to take the comfort of God's word, if his love be shed abroad in our hearts; if his will be the rule of our conduct; if to please him be our sincere intention and delight? "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." If we feel the godly motions of the Spirit drawing us from evil, and inclining us to good, shall we call it all delusion? Surely this must be a dishonouring of the Spirit, which none can commit, but those who are destitute of his grace. Blessed Saviour, make me wise unto salvation through faith in Thee. May I ever take thy word as my rule and guide. May I ever repose on thy faithfulness and care. Then, in the midst of abounding error, and abounding wickedness, I shall hourly experience the blessedness of the promise: "The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him."

Jesus, who hung upon the Cross,
And shed his blood for me,
Displays his power in every herb,
In every flower I see.

The flaming orb that lights the day,
The stars which gild the night,
The rolling sea—the rocky shore,
Proclaim the Saviour's might.

The beasts that roam the woods among,
The birds which fill the air;
Each little insect on its wing,
Bespeak the Saviour's care.

But Man, of all his works below,
Lies nearest to his heart;
Give me, bless'd Saviour, in thy love,
A never-failing part.

The objects of thy love and care,
In safety shall abide
Beneath the shadow of thy wing,
And near thy sacred side.

No harm shall ever reach their souls;
No power, their hope destroy;
For thou didst bleed upon the Cross,
To give them endless joy.

O may I now thy image bear,
From Satan's power set free,
Take up the Cross, despise the shame,
Then reign in heaven with Thee.

XIV.—THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

—"Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."—Matt. xiii. 46.

The language of true believers in Christ, though they be separated by oceans, and are personally unknown to each other, is *experimentally* the same. The humble follower of Jesus, who loves the Saviour amidst the heats of Africa, or the frosts of Labrador; who looks to him by faith, surrounded by the worshippers of Buddhu, or the devotees of Mahomet, will be actuated by the same Spirit, governed by the same word, have the same inward conflict, and enjoy the same strength and consolation which his brethren in Christ experience, who enjoy the advantages of intellectual light, and who live in a land of Bibles and churches.—The delightful accounts which the Missionaries write of these converted Hottentots, Greenlanders, Hindoos, and Mahomedans, prove the truth of the Gospel, and display the power and grace of God.

This verifies, also, St. Paul's declaration:—"There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations; but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But

the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."*

The poor converted negro is not endued with the same intellectual gifts as the learned but pious Professor of Theology; and yet, their spiritual graces are the same. Both are taught by the same Spirit to know themselves as sinners; both are led to Christ as their only Saviour; both have grace given to them, to love and serve him; to confess him before men; to fight the good fight of faith, and to lay hold on eternal life. And, oh! wonderful revelation of the grace of God! their eternal glory and happiness shall be the same. "I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."†

The Church universal is spread over the face of the whole earth. Outward rites may differ, but the inward work is the same. There may be "differences of administration, but the same Lord." O! that we saw more of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," was the truly *catholic* prayer of St. Paul, whose heart was large enough to embrace all who bore the image of the Redeemer, and who worshipped him in spirit and in truth,—while he commanded Timothy to *turn away* from such as had the form of godliness, but denied the power thereof; and to *withdraw himself* from men of corrupt minds, who supposed that gain was godliness.

No outward service can be acceptable to God, if destitute of faith and love.—The religion of Christ is the religion of the heart.—In such a world as this, and composed as we are of body and spirit, *Forms* are needful, to impress our minds, to fix our atten-

* 1 Cor. xii. 4—7. † Rev. vii. 9, 10.

tion, and to enable Christians to unite in worship with each other. — But, outward forms, however imposing, are but like a dead carcase, if unaccompanied by a spirit of love. "O, Lord, who hast taught us that all our doings without charity are nothing worth, send thy Holy Ghost, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whosoever liveth is *counted dead* before thee. Grant this, for thine only Son Jesus Christ's sake. Amen."

There is in all men a natural thirst after happiness. Their tastes may vary, but their pursuit is the same.—This search never fails to end in disappointment, because they do not seek for it where alone it can be found. Did we see men seeking for costly pearls among the pebbles of the British shore, we should smile at their folly.

To the anxious pursuers after happiness, the Almighty speaks in mercy:—"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."* The fruitless effort of these vain pursuers is forcibly described:—"Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is *not bread*, and your labour for that which *satisfieth not?* Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

True happiness flows from true wisdom. But where is wisdom to be found?—that wisdom which can enrich, ennoble, and bless the soul? "The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not in me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal

* Isa. lv. 1.

it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold. Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding.*

Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, is the true Wisdom. He is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God."† He is made unto us—Wisdom.‡ "Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men."—"Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things."—"Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord.§

To find Christ is to find life. For "this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life."‖

To find Christ is to find the Pearl of great price. The vast universe, with all its treasures, cannot purchase it. The Hierarchy of Heaven, with all their united excellencies, cannot procure it for us. Infinite Justice demands a price beyond the power of heavenly intelligences to pay. Before this treasure can be obtained through the merit of the creature, whether human or angelic, works must be performed more than God hath commanded, and be wrought out by a power beyond what he has bestowed. All that is short of this will avail nothing, for thus said our Lord: "When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are *unprofitable servants*, we have done that which was our duty to do."¶ Where is boasting then?—It is excluded.—Fallen man, if left to himself, must sink

* Job xxviii. 14—20. † 1 Cor. i. 24. ‡ 1 Cor. i. 30.
§ Prov. viii. 4, 6, 33—35. ‖ 1 John v. 11, 12. ¶ Luke xvii. 10.

into the depths of misery; and yet, what thousands toil to save themselves on the plank of their own righteousness!

O, ye self-righteous professors, ye, who seek to be justified by the works of the law; ye who labour to obtain a righteousness of your own, and to claim heaven as the purchase of your doings, learn wisdom ere it be too late. Your works, which, in your estimation, are like "goodly pearls," are beheld with abhorrence by a Holy God;—those actions which you so much admire and value, are in His sight as "filthy rags."

Seek, then, by faith and prayer, through the Spirit of all grace, THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE; the Lord Jesus Christ. Sell all that you have to obtain this treasure. So did St. Paul. "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."* So did the Apostles: "Lo, we have left all, and followed thee." And so did the primitive believers, who, for the Gospel's sake, endured a great fight of affliction, and took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance.

Oh! what a mystery of grace is contained in these precious words:—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The Pearl of great price is freely given to enrich my soul.

To all who come this Pearl is free,
To Saul, to Magdalene, to me.

* Phil. iii. 7—9.

Yes! it is freely offered, without money and without price. And does Jesus thus give himself to my poor sinful soul? He does; and declares, by his Apostle, that to as many as receive Him, to them he gives the privilege to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.*

O! blessed Jesus—thou Saviour of my soul, enable me now, even now, to make a full surrender of myself to thee. Make me faithful, humble, and sincere. Preserve me from vain-glory and from self-dependence. Give me a single eye, and simplicity of heart. Guard me from the crafts of Satan, and the poison of my natural corruption. Alas! I have daily to mourn over the secret workings of spiritual pride. When I would speak a word for thee, how soon does vanity spoil all. Oh! show me more of my emptiness and nothingness, of my guilt and misery. Teach me to prize thee as my only treasure, to esteem thee, as indeed Thou art—the Pearl of great price. O! root out of my heart that evil leaven of unbelief, which mars every action; which so awfully dishonours thee! Crucify this thief which robs thee of thy glory, and me of thy consolation. Give me a deeper insight into the dark recesses of my heart.—Let me descend into this sepulchre, loathsome as the sight may be. Oh! may this view of my pollution endear Thee to my heart, my Saviour and my God.—Wash me in the fountain of thy precious blood; cover me with the mantle of thy perfect Righteousness; purify my soul, through the cleansing influences of thy Spirit. Adorn me with Thyself, thou Pearl of great price, that I may appear before Thee as "a bride adorned for her husband."† The more I read the Sacred Scriptures, the more I find that true religion is seated in the heart.—It does not consist in outward forms, however excellent, —in orthodox notions, however correct,—in frames and feelings, however ardent,—in morality of conduct, however admired.—It consists in that faith

* John i. 12. † Rev. xxii. 2.

which worketh by love, which purifies the heart, which overcomes the world. It consists in a vital union to Christ by a living faith; in an entire renunciation of self; in an absolute surrender of the soul to God. It consists in having the understanding enlightened by the truth as it is in Jesus; in having the will swallowed up in the will of God; in having the affections supremely set on things above; in loving God above all created things, and our neighbour as ourselves.

This great work is the operation of the Holy Ghost, and is aptly termed, a new creation,—regeneration,—the conversion of the soul to God.

O! Almighty Saviour! Thou who didst bleed upon the Cross for me; who didst there pour out thy soul unto death for me, how can I adore and praise thee as I ought? Alas! in this world, never!—All my thoughts, all my affections, all my desires, must ever fall infinitely short of all thy praise! And yet, thou compassionate Redeemer, thou dost not reject the sigh of penitence, nor the breathings of the contrite heart.—Thine ear is open to the softest prayer; to the inmost longings of a loving heart.—How gracious are thy words:—"Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive. Ask, and receive, that your joy may be full."*—"Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."†—"Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."‡

* Matt. xxi. 22. John xvi. 24. † Isa. lvii. 15.
‡ Isa. lxvi. 2.

Rejoice, O my soul, at this revelation of love! The heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee, O my God, and yet Thou condescendest to dwell in the contrite heart! Well may angels rejoice over one sinner that repenteth, when Thou, who inhabitest Eternity, makest his heart thy dwelling-place.

What anxious thoughts, what wearying care,
The bosom of the worldling tear!
From morning light, to evening gloom,
Till death consign him to the tomb,
He labours to increase his store,
And thirsts, and longs, and thirsts for more.

Vain man! and why this constant toil,
This digging in the earthly soil?
Thy fondest hope, 't is true succeeds,
But what 's the harvest?—useless weeds!
Thy wealth, with all its glittering store,
Thou soon must leave—and see no more.

The hour will come when thou must die;
With rapid speed thy moments fly.
O! then what anguish and despair,
What wasted moments, years of care,
Like spectres, will thy soul alarm,
And break, of earth, the fatal charm.

There is a Treasure to be found,
A treasure sought on *Gospel ground;*
He is the merchant truly wise
Who can this precious Jewel prize;
Who, for this Pearl of heavenly birth,
Can give the dearest things of earth.

Jesus, my Lord, this treasure is,
The source of pure unfading bliss;
Possessing Him, I, all possess,
That can support, and cheer, and bless.—
O! may this Pearl lie near my heart;
'T was Mary's choice—her better part,
Which nothing from her could remove,—
The gift of God's eternal love.

XV.—CONVERSION OF THE HEART TO GOD.

"Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God."—Jer. xxxi. 18.

WHAT a wonderful work is the conversion of the heart to God. How far beyond the conception and power of the natural man. It is the work of God. Repenting Ephraim prayed, "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God."

Almighty Father! begin, carry on, and complete this work in me, a worthless sinner.—But may I ask so great favour? Thy word encourages, yea, commands me to ask it of thee. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." On what plea can I ask this blessing? On thine own infinite mercy. Thou hast revealed thyself in thy word, as "a just God, and yet a Saviour;"—"just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus;"—"as faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

O! my soul, what undeserved love is this! When God created man, he formed him to show forth his praise. Infinitely happy in himself, he communicated of his own happiness to his creatures. He made man in his own image to manifest his glory. But Adam sinned, and fell! The Almighty, through the riches of his grace, in order to counteract this introduction of moral evil, devised a plan before the foundation of the world,* in the execution of which his glory would be displayed, and those of his creatures restored to happiness who sought for mercy in his own appointed way. Jesus, the Saviour, was revealed. In the fulness of time, he came forth

* 1 Pet. i. 20.

from the Father, took upon him our nature, suffered in our stead, made satisfaction to offended justice, and, just before his return to glory, declared, for the unspeakable consolation of perishing sinners :—"He that believeth, shall be saved."—"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." What adequate return could man render to the Lord for all his benefits? What compensation could he make for all this costly sacrifice?—None. He was a debtor who had nothing to pay, therefore the Lord, for Christ's sake, frankly forgave him. Has man, then, no return to make? Yes, he has;—a return of gratitude and love. This is what the Lord requires. "My son, give me thy heart." We can give him nothing more, and he will accept of nothing less. But how must we give him our hearts? Through his own grace; through the constraining influence of His Spirit. If we love him, it is because he hath first loved us. Both the will and the power to turn unto the Lord, and to give him our hearts, is the work of his grace. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you both to *will* and to *do* of his good pleasure." Our duty is plainly revealed: we must pray without ceasing, in the name of Christ, for every promised blessing. Whatever God hath promised, may be the subject of our prayer, and the object of our pursuit. —If we are true believers, the *Land of Promise* is ours. We may walk through the length and breadth of it, and say :—This is freely given to me.—Oh! how rich are the inheritors of the promises. But, how can we know when our souls are converted to God? When we are enabled, through the Spirit, to make a full surrender of ourselves, body, soul, and spirit, to the God of our salvation. Then we may feel assured that the work of Conversion has been wrought within us.

Lord, convert me by thy grace. Lead me to the Cross. Fill me with thy love, and fit me for thy heavenly kingdom.

O my soul! what progress hast thou made in thy Christian course since first the Lord of all grace brought thee, by his Spirit, into the good old way?

What are thy views of God?

Dost thou reverence his Greatness, his Majesty, and his Omniscience? Art thou impressed with his Holiness, his Justice, his Power, and his Truth? Have these awful attributes and perfections made thee tremble in his presence, when thou rememberest that all of them are directed against thee *as a sinner?*

What are thy views of Sin?

When thou mournest over its effects, as displayed in the troubles and sorrows, the sicknesses and deaths, which desolate the earth, art thou far more grieved at the dishonour which sin brings to God, by lifting its rebellious arm against the Majesty of heaven; and by sinners crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open shame?

Is sin beheld by thee, as the greatest evil, from whence all misery takes its rise? Art thou convinced of its deceiving, hardening, and polluting nature,—of its baneful, unprofitable, deadly fruits?

What are thy views of Thyself?

Hast thou seen thyself a sinner, a rebel, an apostate creature, deserving of nothing less than eternal fire? And has this view of thyself, humbled thee in the sight of that God who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity? who hateth all unrighteousness, and hath declared, that the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God?

Hast thou been convinced of thy utter inability to fulfil the righteousness of that law which reacheth to the thoughts and intents of the heart; which will

accept of nothing less than a sinless obedience, making no allowance for the least deviation from its requirements, but pronouncing him cursed who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them?

Has a deep conviction of thy own sinfulness, and the utter impossibility of thy ever appeasing the wrath of God, or of making an atonement for sin, made thee cry out, "What must I do to be saved?" "O! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" How shall I escape the damnation of hell?

What are thy views of Jesus Christ?

Hast thou beheld him by the eye of faith as an All-sufficient Saviour; as one who can relieve thy wants, supply thy necessities, expiate thy sins, sanctify thy nature, ransom thee from hell, and raise thee to heaven?

Hast thou received Him as the Lord thy Righteousness; by whose merits thou art justified? Is he thy only hope of glory, by whom thou hast access unto the Father? Dost thou believe that as *man*, he died for sinners, and that as *God*, he gave an infinite value to all his sufferings, thus glorifying the Law and his eternal Justice more than if ten thousand guilty worlds had undergone an everlasting punishment?

What are thy views of the Holy Spirit?

Art thou convinced that the great work of Conversion is his work? that it is the office of the Spirit to take of the things of Christ and show them to his people; to apply first the Law to our hearts to humble us, to kill all the noxious weeds of pride and self-love; to lay us in the dust before God; to fill us with self-despair; and then, to reveal Christ to us in all his free salvation and redeeming love?

Hast thou felt the Spirit's power in drawing thee from self to Jesus, from the world to heaven, from sin to holiness, from Satan unto God? Convinced that repentance and faith are the gifts of God, hast thou earnestly and perseveringly sought these promised blessings, pleading the merits of the Son, and imploring the gift of the Holy Spirit to work in thee all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power?

If thou hast felt the constraining influence of divine grace, inclining thee to seek the Lord Jesus and salvation through him: hast thou been faithful to these gracious motions of the Spirit? hast thou assiduously cherished these workings of grace within thee? have they filled thee with joy, and made thee long for a complete redemption from all iniquity, for an abiding union to Christ by faith?

Art thou, O my soul, waiting for the coming of Christ, as Anna and Simeon waited for redemption in Israel? Is every thing here below tasteless and insipid, without an assured interest in the work and love of Jesus, in his blood and righteousness, in his prevailing intercession with His Father in heaven? Dost thou delight in the word of God, in the ordinances of God, in the people of God;—yea, in all who bear his image, who promote his glory, and speak his praise, out of every nation, and kindred, and people, and tongue? Art thou looking for, and hasting unto, the coming of the day of God? Is the second appearing of the Lord Jesus a delightful expectation, when the universal Hallelujah will swell the chorus of his praise?

If these are thy views, O my soul, if this be thy daily desire, thy daily walk, thy daily hope and trust, then rejoice in the Lord always, who hath so graciously drawn thee to himself, and converted thee from a barren desert into the garden of the Lord.

Blessed Jesus, make me sincere. Thou knowest that I desire to love thee, to be separated from all sin. Unite me to Thyself; fill me with spiritual

light; and enable me to go on from strength to strength, till delivered from the burden of the flesh, I appear before thee in Zion.

How insensible is the human heart to heavenly things till touched by divine grace. How hard is my heart! Lord soften it. O that I could love my Saviour above every other object in earth or heaven. Jehovah Jesus is the adoration of angels, and of the perfected saints in glory. Even on earth, though encompassed with infirmity, and seeing as through a glass darkly, the enraptured believer can say:—"Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."* O that my heart may be given to the Tri-une God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the one God of my salvation. Never shall I feel *true* happiness till that blissful moment, when my will is lost in the will of God; when all my fugitive affections are fixed supremely upon Him. Blessed Lord, hasten this moment so full of bliss. May it be *now*, for now is the accepted time, *now* is the day of salvation. To-morrow may find me in eternity. O may I seek thee, and find thee to-day, as all my salvation, and all my desire. Manifest thyself to me as thou dost not unto the world. Show me my interest in the blood of the Lamb. Give me that realising faith which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Bestow upon me a broken heart, a lowly mind, a weanedness from the world, a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, a delight in thy service, a love to every thing which thou lovest; a pleasure in every thing which is pleasing unto Thee.

I live surrounded by Gospel light, and Gospel privileges. Yet, awful thought! *I may pass by the Cross*, on the way to endless misery. When invited by sovereign love to look and be saved, I may pass by on the other side; not submitting myself unto

* Psa. lxxiii. 25, 26.

the righteousness of God.* The gospel, though faithfully preached, may fall like rain on the sandy soil. I may perish within sight of the remedy. The cup of salvation may be brought to my lips, and yet I may refuse to drink it. O the blindness and infatuation of the human heart. Such is the state of the unconverted sinner, living in the midst of gospel blessings. He sinks within sight of the harbour, dashed on the rocks of unbelief, self-righteousness, and the love of the world. Lord, save me from the power of unbelief. Enable me to look unto Jesus as my only Hope, to come to him as my only Help, to receive him as my only Saviour, to rely on him as my only Righteousness, to prize him as my only Treasure, to love him as my only Beloved, the chiefest among ten thousand, the altogether lovely.

XVI.—FAITH WORKING BY LOVE.

"In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love."—Gal. v. 6.

When Adam fell, all his posterity fell in him. The Law being holy, just, and good, condemned the fallen race of Adam, for

> "All that the Law can do
> Is to convince and to condemn;"

but, through the righteousness of the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, the sinner is again received into the favour of God, and accounted righteous in his sight. The righteousness of Christ is the only meritorious cause of a sinner's justification in the sight of God. In this righteousness he stands complete. In this righteousness, he claims a title to the skies.

* Rom. x. 3.

In this righteousness, he answers all the demands of the Law, silences all the accusations of Satan, and is admitted, after death, into the inheritance of the saints in light. Faith is the instrument by which the sinner apprehends this righteousness of Christ, and by means of which it is imputed to him. But faith is the gift of God, wrought in the heart of the sinner through the power of the Holy Ghost. All boasting is therefore for ever excluded, since he that glorieth, must glory in the Lord.

As Christ trod the wine-press of his Father's wrath *alone*, when he stood in the place of sinners, so will he never suffer sinners to share with him in the glory of their salvation. He will not give that honour to another which is due to himself alone. Works, however excellent in their proper place, must never dare to enter into the holy of holies, where none but our Great High Priest can enter. "By his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."*

Although the sinner is accounted righteous before God, through faith in the perfect righteousness of his dear Son, without his works or deserving, yet, faith, being the operation of the Holy Spirit, necessarily produces the fruits of holiness. Here, then, good works assume their proper place and office. Works, as well as faith, can claim no merit in the act of a sinner's justification before God, that being solely through the obedience of Christ; yet do they adorn our Christian profession, prove the reality of our faith, manifest its divine origin, evidence our being in a state of grace, glorify God in the sight of men, silence the aspersions of self-righteous opposers to the truth, and make us meet for the enjoyment and service of God in heaven.

Blessed Jesus! may I ever view thee in this delightful character as—THE LORD MY RIGHTEOUSNESS; then shall I stand with boldness in that day when all thy enemies shall be covered with confusion.

* Heb. ix. 12.

Whilst I look to thee as my only justifying righteousness, O grant that my faith may never cease to work by love. Let every day be employed in thy service, that my hope, through faith in thy blood, may be unclouded.

"*Faith, which worketh by love*," is the concise, but comprehensive declaration of St. Paul, when describing the nature of saving faith by its attendant love. No words can add to its preciousness. We may dwell upon it, and endeavour to *amplify* it by human reasoning, just as a small piece of gold when beaten, may be made to cover a wider surface, but we too often destroy its strength and beauty. "The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."*

Faith in Jesus Christ begets love in the soul; the love of God shed abroad in the heart produces good works; and by works is faith made perfect. Thus the graces of the Spirit, like a chain whose links embrace and strengthen each other, are beautifully combined in the formation of the Christian character.

The following passages, so descriptive of the experience of the true believer, show the concatenation of Christian graces, and afford the richest matter for devout meditation. Oh! that we may read our characters in these precious lines:—

"Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."†

"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing

* Heb. iv. 12. † Phil. iv. 8.

one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."*

"Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.†

"We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us."‡

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

"Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God.

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."§

"Let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God."‖

"Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth

* Col. iii. 12, 13. † 2 Pet. i. 5—7. ‡ Rom. v. 3—5.
§ Matt. v. 3—10. ‖ 1 John iv. 7.

all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth."*

"If these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."..... Wherefore... give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."†

O! what a happy world would this be, did all, who profess and call themselves Christians, live under the happy influence of these gospel precepts. Then men would beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, and learn war no more, when the knowledge of the Lord, thus manifested by it fruits, should cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea.

There is a faith which God abhors: "The devils believe, and tremble."‡ But, "Satan cannot love." "Simon himself believed;" but Peter said to him, "I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity."§

There is a faith which God approves—"the faith of God elect,"‖ which is according to godliness; —a faith which purifies the heart, overcomes the world, and works by love. This loving faith was displayed in all its subduing power, when Jesus dined at the house of Simon the Pharisee. While a broken-hearted penitent was manifesting by her actions her love to the Saviour, Jesus "turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my

* 1 Cor. xiii. 4—8. † 2 Pet. i. 8, 10, 11. ‡ James ii. 19.
§ Acts viii. 13, 23. ‖ Tit. i. 1.

feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven..... *Thy faith hath saved thee;* go in peace."*

Many are superstitiously attached to outward ceremonies; many, also, are as violently opposed to them. Both may be equally destitute of that faith which worketh by love. If bitter envyings and strife tear their bosoms, and disfigure their profession: if anathemas are hurled against each other, with all the fury of the Roman Vatican: is this, I would ask, the religion of the meek and lowly Jesus? Is this the spirit which he imparts to his followers? Is this the faith which leads to heaven?

In a spirit of love we must declare to the blinded formalist, that Christ will not accept of the form for the power of godliness, nor the bending of the knee for the prostration of the heart. Religion without love is a mere shadow; yea, a fatal delusion. It is a road of Satan's making; and many, alas! are walking in it. Man is naturally legal. The sinner labours to save himself. No privations are too great to be endured; no mortifications too painful to be suffered, if only the tormented conscience can find rest. But, the severer the penance, the severer is the sting. Peace flies from the wretched soul which seeks for reconciliation with God, by the endurance of self-inflicted austerities. Never can rest be found till the awakened sinner casts himself without reserve on the crucified Redeemer, looking for pardon only through the merit of his blood. Then ceremonies, when used, will be used only as a means to an end. He will not rest in them, as though they possessed some saving virtue to be obtained by the mere observance of them. Or, if he worships God by some simpler form, he will not ascribe any merit to himself, by adopting what he supposes to be a

* Luke vii. 44—50.

purer mode of worship, knowing that "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature,"* but "the keeping of the commandments of God."†

The garment of Christ was a seamless vest, emblematical of what his church should be. But alas! in every age it has been rent by schisms and divisions. St. Paul deeply lamented over this evil in the Corinthian church: "Is Christ divided?"‡ "Ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal and walk as men?"§

In this our day, the same rending of the Church proves the carnality of our hearts, and manifests the absence of that faith which worketh by love. O! when will Christians love as brethren! Tares alas cover the gospel field! We know what *enemy* hath done this.

Blessed Jesus, in the midst of abounding iniquity, in the midst of prevailing errors, in the midst of schisms and divisions, heart-burnings and angry contentions, enable me to embrace thy truth as revealed in thy word; to worship thee in spirit and in truth; to walk in truth, and to follow Thee with a single eye, who art the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Whilst drawing nigh to thee in the great congregation, may my affections be spiritualised, that I may ever escape the sin of those who draw nigh to thee with their lips, while their hearts are far from thee, and who, having the form of godliness, deny the power thereof. Preserve me from the extremes of contending religionists. Keep me in the path of thy commandments. Increase in me more and more that faith which worketh by love, and which assimilates my soul to Thee:—

How bless'd is the saint who can trust in the Lord,
Whose heart and whose hope can repose on his word;

* Gal. vi. 15. † 1 Cor. vii. 19. ‡ 1 Cor. i. 13.
§ 1 Cor. iii. 3.

Though tempests and storms shall his vessel assail,
His peace is secure, and his joys never fail.

His house is well founded, 't is built on a Rock,
Though mountains may fall, he can stand the rude shock;
'Midst burnings and wastings of earth and of sky,
He lifts up his head, for his Saviour is nigh.

Can riches, can honour, can pleasures afford
Such joy, and such peace, as our merciful Lord
Vouchsafes to his people, and now will impart,
To all who approach him with faith in the heart?

How bless'd is the man, who, redeemed from sin,
Has Christ in the soul, and the witness within;
His walk will be steady, through faith in the word,
His heart will be steadfast, through trust in the Lord.

Thus keep me, bless'd Saviour,—whate'er may betide,
Thy presence can cheer, and thy Spirit can guide;
And when life is o'er, and its sorrows are fled,
Unite me to Thee, as my glorified Head.

XVII.—WALKING WITH GOD.

"Enoch walked with God."—Gen. v. 22.

THE word of God, unlike any other book, has this remarkable feature—that materials for a volume are often compressed in a few words: "God is love." Here is matter for eternal contemplation. All the understandings of men—all the capacities of angels—will never exhaust the inexhaustible fulness of this short sentence.

"Enoch walked with God," expresses in its condensed form the principles and practice, the privileges and perseverance, of the true believer. These few words may be expanded, till volumes are written to display in all its loveliness the character so con-

cisely exhibited by the apostle. "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."*

Enoch possessed a principle of faith. He believed in the great sustaining promise of the patriarchal age—in the seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent's head. "He pleased God;" but without faith it is impossible to please him, therefore Enoch was a believer. He was justified by faith, and by works was his faith made perfect. His practice condemned the world; so also did his prophecy. For, saith St. Jude: "Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these," (of the apostates in the latter days) "saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all; and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."† St. Paul declared the same truth. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe."‡

St. John saw in vision the same overwhelming judgment: "I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had

* Heb. xi. 5, 6. † Jude 14, 15. ‡ 2 Thess. i. 7—10.

a name written, that no man knew but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called THE WORD OF GOD. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."* "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him."†

Thus, in every age, the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. "Enoch walked *with God*." He enjoyed the privilege of adoption. He could call God, Father. He lived in a state of communion with the God of his salvation. But how can two walk together except they be agreed? Enoch pleased God, and was made happy in His love. He was in a state of reconciliation through faith in the promised seed; for all who lived before the advent of Christ were delivered from the curse through faith in the Saviour *to be revealed*—Jesus Christ, the Righteous—the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. O! how great are the privileges of the saints!

"Enoch *walked* with God." This implies progression. He persevered in the ways of holiness. He did not grow weary in well-doing. He was not offended with revealed truths, like those who walked no more with Jesus when he declared himself to be the food of their souls.‡ He endured unto the end; and God took him, by an immediate translation, from earth to the Paradise above.

How wonderful are the ways of God, and yet how gracious! Each period of time, Patriarchal, Mosaical, and Christian, was blessed by the manifestation of the divine goodness. Adam was driven

* Rev. xix. 11—16. † Rev. i. 7. ‡ John vi.

out of Paradise. By his transgression, heaven was barred against him; but Mercy, in the person of the Eternal Son, opened the gates of heaven to all believers. To animate the hopes of the redeemed, and to assure them of another and a better world, Enoch was translated during the Patriarchal age; Elijah during the dispensation of Moses; and the blessed Redeemer, when he had finished his work of love, ascended up on high—thus manifesting his victory over death, and entering as our forerunner into the kingdom of glory.*

Be not deceived, O! my soul, by false appearances. It is one thing to profess the Gospel of grace, and another thing to possess the grace of the Gospel. It is not the noisy talker about Jesus, but the humble walker with Jesus, who is the beloved of the Lord. The heart of Paul was deeply wounded by hollow professors of the truth.

"Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an ensample. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things."† "There are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped."‡

The gifts of eloquence and learning may raise a man in the estimation of the world, though destitute of the Spirit of Christ. The humble, but despised Christian, adorned with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is, in the sight of God, of great price, will be owned by the Searcher of hearts, while the pompous professor is no better than sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. He that saith he abideth in Christ ought himself also so to walk even as he walked. Are these things so? Then, O my soul, unfold the sacred volume, and examine which is the

* Heb. vi. 20. † Phil. iii. 17—19. ‡ Tit. i. 10, 11.

way to heaven, and how thou must walk therein. Jesus is the way—the only way—to Heaven. Hear his own blessed words: "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me."*

Gracious Saviour! I bless thee, I praise thee for this soul-invigorating declaration. There are many ways to hell, but only one to heaven, and Thou art that Way. Oh! that I may never quit this true, this living, this consecrated way, on which the Patriarchs and Prophets, the Apostles and Saints, have journeyed to the celestial Canaan. But how may I be assured that I am walking on this sacred road; that I am in the way to everlasting glory? Thou hast said: "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." O, blessed Jesus, open my understanding, that I may understand the Scriptures. Show me Thyself in all the fulness of thy power—in all the freeness of thy love. Guide me by thy Spirit, for it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. Study, O my soul, the records of eternal life. There thou wilt discover, through the teaching of the Spirit of Truth, whether thou art a pilgrim on the road to Zion. In that precious Book thou art informed how thou art *not to walk*, if a believer in Jesus.

Walk not after the flesh.—Rom. viii. 1.

Walk not after the course of this world.—Eph. ii. 2.

Walk not in darkness.—1 John i. 6.

Walk not by sight.—2 Cor. v. 7.

Walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind.—Eph. iv. 17.

These important passages stand as beacons, to guard thee against the threatened danger. Whatever thy profession may be, if thou art walking in any of these downward ways, thou art going, with hasty steps, to the torments of hell!

* John xiv. 6.

Lord! thou hast said, "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them."* Fulfil this gracious promise to thy servant, who is now seeking to walk in the light of thy countenance, and by the guidance of thy Holy Spirit. Cause me to walk in thy statutes faithfully unto the end. Renew my strength that I may run and not be weary, and walk and not faint; yea, that I may mount with wings like an eagle, till I reach thy abode of glory.

Search the Scriptures again, O my soul, and learn from these oracles of truth, how thou art to walk as a believer, and how thou mayest be assured that thou art a believer, if thy walk be correspondent to these sacred marks:

Walk with God.—Gen. v. 24.

Walk after the Spirit.—Rom. viii. 1.

Walk in Christ.—Col. ii. 6.

Walk by faith.—2 Cor. v. 7.

Walk in love.—Eph. v. 2.

Walk in truth.—3 John 4.

Walk in wisdom toward them that are without.—Col. iv. 5.

Walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.—Eph. v. 15.

Walk in the light.—1 John i. 7.

Walk as a child of light.—Ephes. v. 8.

Walk in the fear of the Lord.—Acts ix. 31.

Walk worthy the vocation wherewith thou art called.—Eph. iv. 1.

Walk in newness of life.—Rom. vi. 4.

Walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.—Col. i. 10.

Walk worthy of God, who hath called thee unto his kingdom and glory.—1 Thess. ii. 12.

Walk as Christ walked.—1 John ii. 6.

* Isa. xlii. 16.

Thus must thou walk, if thou wilt be a disciple of Jesus—a child of God—a temple of the Holy Ghost. And if, through grace, thou thus walkest and endurest unto the end, hear what the Lord saith for thy unspeakable comfort.

Thou shalt walk with me in white.—Rev. iii. 4.

Thou shalt come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon thy head; thou shalt obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.—Isa. xxxv. 10.

Blessed Emmanuel! thou knowest that I desire to walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, but to walk with my whole heart "in the way of thy laws, and in the work of thy commandments," —to walk by faith in thy blood and righteousness, to the honour and glory of thy holy name.

Like Enoch and Noah* may I walk with thee. Like Abraham may I walk before thee with a perfect heart. Like David may I set the Lord alway before me.

Oh! suffer me not to walk in the imagination of my heart; but in mercy teach me the good way wherein I should go. Then when I walk in the midst of trouble thou wilt revive me; yea, when I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I shall fear no evil, for thou wilt be with me, thy rod and thy staff they shall comfort me.

"O God, who declarest thy Almighty power most chiefly in showing mercy and pity: mercifully grant unto me such a measure of thy grace, that, running the way of thy commandments, I may obtain thy gracious promises, and be made a partaker of thy heavenly treasure through Jesus Christ my Lord. Amen."

O! that like Enoch I may walk
With God in fellowship divine,
Enjoy the witness of his love,
And in his blessed image shine.

* Gen. vi. 9.

When thou shalt call me hence away,
I then shall prove the promise true;
While hastening to th' eternal world,
Thy glory, Lord, bursts on my view.

Like Abraham may I talk with Thee,
As friends converse who dearly love,
And taste the comforts of thy grace,
Till I shall reach the world above.

As bless'd Elijah, strong in faith,
Was borne aloft on wings of fire,
So may my heart on Thee be fix'd,
Ascending on intense desire.

O may I walk with Thee in love,
And live, as ever in thy sight,
Till far remov'd from sin and woe,
I walk with Thee array'd in white.

XVIII.—THE PRIVILEGES OF THE BELIEVER.

"All things are yours."—I Cor. iii. 21.

"I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever."—John xiv. 16.

How inconceivably great is the goodness of God to his believing people. In his holy word, he assures them, that through his over-ruling Providence, all things shall work together for their good; that he loves them with an everlasting love; that they are dear to him as the apple of his eye; precious to him as the signet on his right hand; that he will be to them as a little sanctuary in all countries whither they shall come; that he will never leave them nor forsake them. He denounces a woe on all who offend them, and pronounces a blessing on all who give them only a cup of cold water for his name's sake.

O! how great is the goodness of the Lord,

which he hath laid up for them that fear him, which he hath wrought for them that trust in him before the sons of men! All the promises of the New Covenant are *primarily* made to Christ, who merited every blessing by his obedience unto death: and they are *secondarily* made to every believer in Him, who, standing complete in his righteousness, becomes interested in all the promises of God, both as respects this world and that which is to come.

Amazing privilege! Every believer in Jesus is an HEIR OF GOD THROUGH CHRIST! He inherits Him as his portion, in whom he lives and moves and has his being; by whom all things were made, and by whom all things consist. He inherits Him, who fills heaven and earth with His glory; who is the Fountain of all felicity; in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore!

O! my soul, never canst thou thirst enough after this exalted privilege. In thyself, thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: in Christ, thou art happy, and honourable, and rich, and glorious. In thyself, thou hast nothing but sin and misery: in Christ, thou art clothed with the garment of salvation; renewed in the spirit of thy mind; and filled with peace and joy. In thyself, thou art an heir of hell: in Christ, O wonderful thought! thou art an HEIR OF GOD. How bright, how dazzling, how surpassing the splendour of the mid-day sun, is this inconceivably great and glorious privilege to be AN HEIR OF GOD! Give me, O Lord, the steady eye of faith, that as the eagle soars aloft, fixing its eye upon the sun, so I may rise in heart and affection above this lower world, looking unto Jesus the Sun of Righteousness. By faith, enable me to substantiate the things hoped for, and to realise the things not seen. By faith, may I daily anticipate that glorious period, when, aroused by the Archangel's trumpet, my sleeping dust will leave its bed of clay, and with my enrap-

tured soul, be made a blessed vessel in thy courts above, there to be filled with thine everlasting love.

"All things are yours." Well might St. Paul say: "God is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us.....That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." Well might he say—"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the *unsearchable riches of Christ*." A heart penetrated with a sense of the love of God, will be overwhelmed at the view of such amazing mercy. What mind can conceive the fulness of this assurance: "All things are yours." On what is this expansive declaration founded? "Ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." O! then, my soul, rejoice if grace has united thee to the Saviour. To every believer, to all the churches of the saints in every age, the Apostle writes: "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

When Jesus was drawing nigh to the time when he should go to the Father, he promised to his sorrowing disciples another Comforter. As heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, they were not left comfortless. The bodily absence of Christ was to be more than compensated by his spiritual presence. "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make *our abode with him*." "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." "I will pray that Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." "He dwelleth with you, and shall be *in you*." "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me."

O! my soul! hast thou received this heavenly Visitant? Important enquiry! since without the Spirit of Christ, thou art none of his. Contemplate the manifold operations of the Eternal Spirit, the Holy Ghost, the Comforter. Examine with minutest scrutiny, whether any of these operations have been wrought in thee, thereby proving that thou art indeed united to Christ, according to the Apostle: "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit;" and may the Lord assist thee in this important search.

It is the office of the Spirit to convince the world of sin; to open the eyes of the understanding, that we may see our pollution, wretchedness, and danger; to apply the Law to our consciences, and from a deep conviction of our innumerable transgressions against it, to fill our souls with anguish; to drive us to self-despair, destroying all our towering hopes of gaining heaven by our own deservings; bringing us to the borders of eternal ruin, and there, in the view of everlasting torments, forcing us to cry out with heartfelt exclamation: What must I do to be saved? how shall I escape the damnation of hell?

Hast thou ever experienced these powerful convictions of the Spirit? Hast thou seen the exceeding sinfulness of sin? Art thou made deeply sensible of thy great depravity, of thine amazing distance from that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord? Hast thou been deeply humbled at the view of thyself as a fallen, guilty, polluted creature? And has this view humbled thee in the dust before God? Has it filled thee with true contrition? Has it emptied thee of all self-dependence? Has it, in the spirit of true repentance and humiliation, made thee cry out, "God be merciful to me a sinner?"

It is the office of the Spirit to reveal the Lord Jesus Christ to every contrite sinner, as an all-sufficient Saviour, willing, and able, and ready to save all that come unto him, be they never so vile and worthless. Jesus graciously said: When the

Spirit of truth is come he shall testify of me. He shall glorify me. He shall take of mine, and show it unto you. Thus the Spirit applies the reviving cordial of the Gospel to every sin-sick soul. He manifests to every trembling sinner the freeness of Christ's love, the fulness of his salvation, the greatness of his power, the riches of his grace, the efficacy of his righteousness, the preciousness of his blood, the prevalency of his intercession, and to crown all, his willingness to save, even *to the uttermost*, all that come unto God by him. He kindles a flame of love in the sinner's heart; moves him to pray to God for pardon through the merits of His Son; inclines him to seek earnestly for an interest in this precious Saviour; enables him to lay hold on Christ by faith; and transforms him from a rebel, into a humble, loving believer in the Lord Jesus. Thus the Spirit glorifies Christ, by applying the blessings of his salvation to the hearts of sinners, drawing them out of the fatal bondage of corruption, delivering them from the power of darkness, and making them heirs of glory through faith.

Have I been thus brought to Jesus through the sweet constraining influence of the Spirit of grace? Have I had this view of Jesus as One mighty to save? And believing in him, have I experienced his saving power in my soul, inspiring me with humble boldness to draw nigh to the mercy-seat? Have I pleaded before God the all-prevailing merits of his dear Son; and have I felt a joy springing up in my heart from a sense of blood-bought pardon? Do I feel the terrors of the Law supplanted by the consolations of the Gospel? Are all our hopes of happiness and heaven derived from the death and sufferings of Christ, and Christ alone?

It is the office of the Spirit to guide believers into all truth; to renew their natures, to sanctify their hearts, to illuminate their minds, to rectify their wills, to purify their affections, to make them *new creatures* in Christ Jesus. The Spirit of Christ

is the Spirit of holiness. Through his transforming power, the church is all glorious within, a temple prepared for the residence of the God of heaven. Oh! how great are the privileges of the saints. They are as a royal diadem in the hand of their God. Well might angels sing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Have I been led by the Spirit into the truth as it is in Jesus? Have I experienced a change of heart? Is it now my chief delight to live by faith upon the Son of God, to meditate upon his work of redemption, and to show my love by a prompt, cheerful, unreserved obedience to all his commandments? Is holiness the element in which I move? Is sin odious in my eyes, and hateful to my heart? Am I daily seeking for a more entire deliverance from its power? Do I find the great work of sanctification progressively advancing in my soul? Have old things passed away; are all things become new?

It is the office of the Spirit to animate, comfort, and strengthen the faithful in Christ Jesus. Hence he is styled the COMFORTER; the Spirit of consolation, a quickening Spirit. By his gracious influences he sheds abroad the love of God in the hearts of believers; fills them, at times, with joy unspeakable and full of glory, and gives them a peace that passeth understanding. He supports them under the severest trials; enables them to rejoice under the greatest tortures; preserves them from the power of evil; guards them from the attacks of Satan; upholds them on their journey through the wilderness, and brings them triumphant to the heavenly Canaan.

Hast thou, O my soul, experienced these delightful influences of the Spirit of grace, the Comforter? When the enemy comes in like a flood, dost thou experience this precious promise—"The Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him?" Under the various crosses and trials of life, what have been thy consolations? Have they been all drawn from

the Fountain of living Waters, flowing in a sacred stream of peace and joy? Are the fruits of the Spirit exhibited in all their loveliness in thy daily walk? With the Apostle canst thou say: "I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all my tribulation"?

The Spirit of Christ is the seal of our adoption, the earnest of future glory. As all who are destitute of the Spirit of Christ are none of his, so, as many as are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God. Believers, who are the temples of the Holy Ghost, are commanded to cherish his godly motions, to abstain from all appearance of evil, lest, by too near an approach to sin, they be drawn aside by its influence from the path of duty, and so grieve the Spirit of God. They are exhorted to beware of wilful transgression lest they quench the holy flame, and thus provoke the Spirit to depart from them, for God hath said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man."

Am I sealed with this glorious seal of heaven? Is the image of Jesus impressed upon my soul by the Spirit of holiness? Have I received this divine earnest of the heavenly inheritance? Is the private seal of my adoption into the family of God made manifest by the broad and public seal of my sanctification? Am I afraid of offending, grieving, and quenching the Spirit of my beloved Saviour? Do I cherish the godly motions, and pray without ceasing to be more faithful to the outward calls and inward convictions of the Holy Ghost?

Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest how I desire to be thine. Impart to me this blessed Spirit, without whom all profession is hypocrisy. May I never separate the precept from the promise, nor the character from the privileges of thy people. Thou hast declared, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

Descend, blessed Spirit, into my longing soul. Take up thine abode within me. Convince me of sin. Show me my true character. Lead me to Jesus Christ. Work in me faith and love and every grace. Destroy the power of evil in my soul. Infuse all good desires. Bring them to good effect. Be thou my guardian and guide; my support through life; my consolation in death; my everlasting portion in heaven. Oh! shine with beams of love on my soul, till I am made, through sovereign grace, to shine as the sun in the kingdom of my Father.

My soul enjoys a sweet repose,
Beneath the Saviour's sheltering grace;
A solace for its direst woes,
Amid the beamings of his face.
Detach'd from earth's deceitful joys,
Allur'd by his attractive love,
I seek a world which never cloys,
A world of light and bliss above.

Instruct thy servant, gracious Lord,
Thy easy yoke with joy to bear;
Enlightened by thy faithful word,
To shun each error's fatal snare.
O! may I close each passing day,
With humble love, with holy fear;
Enjoy thy presence on the way,
And ever find thy succour near.

By faith, it is, that I am thine,
Powerful Saviour, faithful Guide;
O! deign upon thy work to shine,
And never let my footsteps slide.
Come, Lord, with thy Almighty grace,
Confirm my faith, my strength renew,
Till I shall win the heavenly race,
And gain the glorious prize in view.

Yes! Lord, thy goodness, and thy love,
Already hears and answers prayer;

The Light descending from above,
My soul with holy comforts cheer.
How rich the favour;—how divine,
Jesus is mine, and I am his;
All glory be for ever thine,
Thou Fountain of eternal bliss.

XIX.—THE SUPERIORITY OF GRACES TO GIFTS.

"Covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way."—1 Cor. xii. 31.

"Follow after charity."—1 Cor. xiv. 1.

One man may have great gifts whilst destitute of saving grace. Another may have great grace, and yet possess few gifts. Which of the two is the most to be desired? The enlightened Christian who knows himself, and who has experienced the power of the Gospel, will not be long in determining.

Supernatural gifts, such as "working of miracles," "speaking with tongues," "discerning of spirits," &c., which were bestowed upon some of the first Christians; and a critical knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, an eloquence in conveying scriptural truths, and an aptitude to acquire languages which some Christians now possess, only tend to puff up and exalt the gifted individuals, if unaccompanied with the graces of humility, self-denial, and love. Hence gifts may be exercised by persons who never will enjoy the glories of heaven.

The Scriptures are clear on this point. "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied" (or preached) "in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name have done many *wonderful works?* And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." "When Jesus had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power

against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease." Amongst this number was "Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him."

But what did our Lord say of Judas? "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is *a devil?*" And what did St. Peter declare concerning him at the election of another apostle to fill his office? "Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go go to his *own place.*" And what place that was, we learn by implication from our blessed Lord. "The Son of Man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! it had been good for that man *if he had not been born.*" These words would never have been uttered had Judas' *own place* been the place where the penitent thief on the cross was to meet Jesus: "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Judas, like Lot's wife, stands as a monument of God's wrath, and as a warning against false profession.

Grace, however humble be its possessor, though a poor diseased Lazarus, will never be rejected. Grace is the sterling coin of the kingdom, bearing the image of the Sovereign. When knowledge shall vanish away, when tongues shall cease, and miracles be no longer needed, grace will shine with increased splendour, for glory is but grace perfected. The grace of faith in Christ, love to his name, devotedness to God, activity in his service, self-denial, and spiritual-mindedness, will then receive the smiles of the Great Judge of quick and dead. Oh! that I may daily follow after charity, without which all my doings are nothing worth.

Superior gifts make a man more known to the Christian world, and, by some, to be regarded as a kind of oracle. This distinction is highly gratifying to the natural heart; and the more gratifying it is to

any one, the more dangerous it becomes to his soul, because spiritual pride is fostered, and self is exalted in the place of Jesus. The graces of the Spirit are of a more silent, unobtrusive nature; they tend to make a man low in his own eyes; they lead him into retirement and spiritual communion with God, and cause him to avoid rather than court the observation of mankind. From hence it is evident that all are not Israel who are of Israel, and that there is no necessary connection between gifts and graces.

The kingdom of God consists not of gifts and ceremonies, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. It is not the *able talkers* about religion who will be rewarded at the last day, but the *humble walkers* with Jesus. Many, who are now despised on account of their slender capacities and weak intellectual attainments, or regarded as half Christians, because they cannot carry the point against a witty infidel, or define some mysterious doctrine of Scripture, but whose lives are the most convincing arguments for the power and truth of the Gospel, whose hope is founded on Christ alone, who strenuously oppose all sin, and labour, through the Spirit, to perfect holiness in the fear of God, will receive the plaudit, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant:.....enter thou into the joy of thy Lord;" while the gifted, but unsound professors of religion, will be frowned into hell. This, the Great Judge himself has declared: "Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not." "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away." "Many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first." "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment."

It is very desirable to "covet earnestly the best gifts," to increase in wisdom and knowledge, to be able to speak acceptably to others about the things of God; but still, St. Peter places grace before

knowledge: "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," for, adds St. Paul, "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth." Lord, I humbly beseech thee to give me grace to be faithful. Impart unto me this invaluable blessing experienced by the early Christians, when "great grace was on them all." May the grace of Christ dwell in my heart, destroying sin in the power thereof, and exciting me to childlike obedience to thy will; may the light of Truth irradiate my path, and thy Spirit guide me along the consecrated way, till I reach the heavenly world, where all is light, and life, and love for ever.

"Follow after Charity,"—delightful exhortation; as if the Apostle had said,—follow after happiness and glory; follow after that, which will form your blessedness in time and eternity. "God is love," and "every one that loveth is born of God." Come, O my soul, and think upon redeeming love, till all thy powers are lost in this ocean of grace, this infinity of mercy.

What? did the Great Jehovah condescend to veil himself in human flesh to save rebellious worms from endless woe, and can I, for whom he lived, and bled, and died, feel no concern about my eternal state? no return to Him, of grateful and adoring praise? no hatred of those sins for which he suffered? no fear of hell? no longings after heaven? Amazing hardness—dreadful insensibility.

Lord, take away this heart of stone, and give me a heart of flesh, a heart susceptible of thy mercies. Draw me with the cords of love, and bind my wayward affections to thy Cross.

Give me an abstraction from the world, that while my hands are diligently employed in the way of duty, my heart may be set on things above. Impart unto me a spiritual mind, a constant relish for heavenly employments. Let me live in the spirit of this petition: "Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven." Create in me a new and contrite heart; a

heart deeply convinced of its own depravity, earnestly seeking for pardon of all sin, through the precious blood of Jesus, and daily growing in holiness through the Spirit of His Grace.

Lord, increase my faith, that being united to Christ, I may become a living branch in the true Vine, a member of his mystical body, a sheep of his pasture, a child of his family, a partaker of the divine nature, an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ. Oh! how wonderful are the revelations of thy love; how glorious are the privileges of thy people. Lord increase my faith to lay hold on this hope set before me in the Gospel of thy Son.

Give me, heavenly Father, I humbly beseech thee, an earnest desire to do those things which thou hast commanded, to avoid whatever thou hast forbidden, and to obtain those blessings which thou hast promised to every true believer. Give me a single eye to thy glory. May thy glory be the end and aim of all my actions. Preserve me from all pride and vain-glory; and make me a little child in humility and simplicity, seeking thy honour and glory above every other object in the world.

Fill my heart, O God, with gratitude, and my mouth with praise for all thy mercy, grace, and love vouchsafed to one so vile and worthless. O! that I might every moment live for thee, think on thee, and speak for thee; then would my heart be pure, and my conversation be always seasoned with grace, good to the use of edifying. Happy will that period be when all these obtrusive cares of life will have an end, and nothing will be found to interrupt the work of adoration through the ages of eternity. Come, blessed Spirit, prepare me for thy abode of glory; wean my heart daily from this wicked world; impress the Saviour's image on my soul, that when he shall appear, I may be like him, when I see him as he is.

XX.—THE BLESSEDNESS OF A CHILDLIKE SPIRIT, AND A GRATEFUL HEART.

"Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."—Gal. iv. 6.

No language can adequately express the condescension and forbearance of God towards his rebellious creatures: "Hear, O heavens; and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."* "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts."† "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord."‡ "Return ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings."§ "If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the Lord, return unto me."‖

The Almighty addresses us in the character of a tender Father, but of a father, slighted and disobeyed. What parent, who has experienced the ingratitude and disobedience of his children, piercing his heart with grief, can read, unmoved, these pathetic appeals? But, while his own soul has been bowed down with sorrow by the conduct of his children, has he not been acting a similar part towards his heavenly Father? And may not the very trials which afflict him, be sent in judgment for his own rebellions against the Father of mercies? How often do we read our sin in our punishment.

Who, then, can fully estimate the blessedness of a childlike spirit? See a family, where the children honour and obey their parents, and where the parents

* Isa. i. 2, 3. † Mal. i. 6. ‡ Jer. iii. 14.
§ Jer. iii. 22. ‖ Jer. iv. 1.

love and watch over their children, and there you behold a lovely oasis, a green spot in this desert world. In such a family, where God is worshipped in spirit and in truth, where love, like a golden girdle, binds each heart to the other, you have a little heaven upon earth. But look into a household, where the children resist the authority of the father, and despise the admonitions of the mother; where the brothers and sisters quarrel with each other, and kindle a daily fire of discord,—and there, you have a picture of that place where each, hating the other, shall be miserable for ever.

The world is ready to stamp with baseness an act of ingratitude towards an earthly benefactor, who may have shown us some occasional favour, or afforded us some seasonable relief; but, it passes over, as a venial fault, our forgetfulness of God. This is bad; but surely it is worse when those who make a *profession of religion* act as the world does. "My people have forgotten me days without number."* "They have forgotten the Lord their God."† "They have forgotten their resting-place."‡

The sin of ingratitude is unspeakably criminal when manifested towards the Almighty Father of mankind, by whom we were created, by whom we are preserved, and from whom we receive every blessing. Happy, indeed, are they who live in the spirit of adoption, and under the influence of grateful love. Blessed Lord, be pleased to give me a thankful heart to taste thy gifts with joy. Enable me to trace every mercy to its proper source, even to thy Covenant Love in Christ Jesus; to see thy hand in all the changing events of life; and to acknowledge thy goodness in the bestowment of my daily comforts. But above all, O eternal God, pour into my heart the spirit of praise and adoration for thine unfathomable love in the redemption of the world.

Never can I sufficiently extol the grace of God the Father, in devising such a glorious plan of salva-

* Jer. ii. 32. † Jer. iii. 21. ‡ Jer. l. 6.

tion as that revealed in the Gospel; for giving his Son, his Well-beloved, to sufferings, and to death! Oh! the length and breadth, the depth and height of this love, which passeth knowledge! Who can find words to magnify the grace of God the Son, in so freely leaving the bosom of his Father, descending from the heights of glory to the lowest depths of human misery, taking upon him, not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham, becoming a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, fulfilling all righteousness for ruined sinners, dying the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God, and ascending up on high as the ever-glorified God-Man, there to appear in the presence of God for us, to intercede for us with the Father, and to perfect, by his living care, what his dying love began! Where shall we begin our praises to God the Holy Ghost, by whom we are enabled to believe in Jesus, to love Jesus, and to bear his holy image; by whose quickening power we are raised from a death in sin to a life of righteousness; by whose almighty aid we are enabled to contend against our spiritual foes; and by whose refreshing, enlivening, comforting, and sanctifying grace, we are supported and animated under all our trials, and made to rejoice in hope of the glory of God?

These mercies, O my soul, demand thy loudest praise, for, like their Author, they are immutable and eternal: "I have loved thee with an *everlasting love*; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee."* "Israel shall be saved with an *everlasting salvation*, and shall never be confounded world without end."† "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness."‡ Well might Jeremiah say, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him."§

* Jer. xxxi. 2. † Isa. xlv. 17. ‡ Lam. iii. 22. 23. § Lam. iii. 24.

Are we groaning under a deep conviction of our wretchedness; and do we see ourselves to be nothing but sin and pollution? Let us praise God, who hath opened a fountain for sin and for uncleanness, even the precious blood of Christ, which cleanseth from all sin.

Are we hungering and thirsting after righteousness? Let us bless God for this spiritual appetite, remembering that in our Father's house there is bread enough and to spare; that Jesus is the bread of life; that in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and that we are invited to receive out of his fulness and grace for grace.

Are we lamenting our spiritual nakedness, and afraid to appear before God? Let us rejoice that God hath provided a garment for us, even the goodly raiment of our Elder Brother, the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose righteousness the Church is clothed, and by whose graces she is prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*

Are we labouring under inward corruptions and indwelling sin? Let us praise God for those rich promises of his word, which tell us that his grace is sufficient for us; that we shall not be tempted above that we are able to bear; that if we draw nigh to God, he will draw nigh to us; that if we seek him, he will be found of us; that sin shall not have dominion over us; that he will bruise Satan under our feet shortly; and that he will make us more than conquerors through Him who hath loved us, and given Himself for us.

O my soul, bless the Lord for these abounding mercies. Cease not to praise his holy name. Let every day, as it increases thy obligations, stimulate thy gratitude and love. But yet remember, that mere verbal religion is unavailing in the sight of Him who demands *the heart*. Lord give me grace to glorify thee in my body and in my spirit which are thine; that, whilst I offer unto thee the sacrifice

* Rev. xxi. 2.

of praise continually, I may not forget "to do good, and to communicate," since with such sacrifices thou art well pleased, when presented to thee on that altar which alone sanctifieth the gift—the Lord Jesus Christ.

Forget not, O my soul, "TO DO GOOD." Compassionate precept, little understood, and less practised. The worldly professor of religion may perform many benevolent actions; so also do those who deny the Divinity of Christ; but a work, though beneficial to others, will be unacceptable to God, if done without regard to his will and his glory. The afflicted may be bountifully relieved, even by an infidel or an atheist, acting on the mere impulse of natural sympathy; but, can such an act be acceptable to God? Surely not. How strong is the language of the Almighty to the rebellious house of Israel: "I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt-offerings, I will not *accept* them."* How gracious are the words of Christ to those who do good for his name's sake: "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only *in the name of a disciple*, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise *lose* his reward."† But, to those who give alms from ostentation or self-righteousness, no blessing is imparted: "When thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they *may have glory of men*. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward."‡ "All their works they do for to be seen of men."§ The *quantity* cannot supersede the *quality* of our actions,—"Though I bestow *all my goods* to feed the poor,..... and *have not charity*, it profiteth me nothing."‖

A work, to be really and scripturally *good*, must proceed from a right principle, be done by a right rule, and be directed to a right end. The ROOT of

* Amos v. 21, 22. † Matt. x. 42. ‡ Matt. vi. 2.
§ Matt. xxiii. 5. ‖ 1 Cor. xiii. 3.

all acceptable obedience is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, without whom we can do nothing pleasing unto God; but by virtue of our union with him through faith, we receive grace from above, and are made fruitful in every good work. The RULE by which our actions are to be regulated is, not the traditions of men, but the word of God, the Scriptures of truth, which alone are able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith, which is in Jesus Christ. The END to which all our doings must be directed, is the glory of God, and the present and eternal welfare of our fellow-creatures. We must seek in all things to promote the honour and praise of Him who hath called us with an holy calling, by employing our talents in his service, laying out ourselves for usefulness, relieving the needy, and comforting the disconsolate, strengthening the weak, and confirming the strong, admonishing the wavering, and reproving the profane in a spirit of Christian meekness and love, that the kingdom of the Redeemer may be extended, through the divine blessing on our labours, by the suppression of vice, and the promotion of true religion and virtue.

"Lord of all power and might, the Author and Giver of all good things, graft in our hearts the love of thy name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of thy great mercy keep us in the same, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

How bless'd is he who inly feels
The witness of a Saviour's love;
To whom the Spirit, Christ, reveals,
And draws his heart to joys above.

With child-like love, and holy fear,
He lowly bends before the throne;
He views his Heavenly Father near,
And pleads the merit of his Son.

In grateful strains, he pours his heart
To Him who died his soul to save;

He knows that he will ne'er depart,
Nor leave him in the silent grave.

By faith he views Redemption's hour,
When Christ, descending from above,
Shall raise him by his mighty power,
And fill his soul with endless love.

O! may this blessedness be mine!
This child-like spirit now be given;
Then shall the praise be ever thine,
My Saviour in the highest heaven.

XXI.—THE HARMONY OF CHRISTIAN GRACES.

"I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever."—Jer. xxxii. 39.

When we contemplate the Church of God as described in the Holy Scriptures, we must be struck with that unity of principle and that union of heart, which form its beauty and stability. Our Lord thus intercedes for his believing people: "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may *be one in us*; that the *world may believe* that thou hast sent me."* This unity was beautifully exhibited by the church at Jerusalem: "They continued *steadfastly* in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.....And they, continuing daily with *one accord* in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people."† The apostolic exhortation enforces this oneness of faith and practice which would unite the Church of Christ, and make it a holy phalanx, against which the gates of hell could not prevail. "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith

* John xvii. 21. † Acts ii. 42, 46, 47.

ye are called. With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep *the unity of the Spirit* in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."*

This lovely feature of the Christian Church was soon disfigured. St. Paul had to mourn over, and admonish many, whose minds were corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ:—"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."† "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you."‡ "Ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?"§ Thus rapidly did tares spring up among the wheat. Happy would it have been for the Church of Christ if this work of the enemy had been confined to the primitive age: but alas! every age has exhibited his work of destruction. As union is strength, so the arch-enemy well knows, that disunion is weakness.—How glorious will that period be when the universal Church shall experience the fulness of the promise, "I will give them *one heart*, and *one way*, that they may fear me."

* Eph. iv. 1—6. † Rom. xvi. 17, 18. ‡ 1 Cor. i. 10, 11.
§ 1 Cor. iii. 3, 4.

The graces of the Spirit harmonise and combine together. Like the links of a chain they mutually encircle and strengthen each other. How different are the vices of the human heart. They are, for the most part, discordant. Yet, while they appear to run in opposite directions, and in many cases to oppose each other, they all meet in one point—the destruction of the soul.

What can be more opposed, in appearance at least, than the miser and the spendthrift, the libertine and the formalist, the man whose heart is full of the cares of life, rising early, and late taking rest that he may amass a fortune, and the man of pleasure who says to his soul—"Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Yet, these different vices all conspire the eternal ruin of the soul, and often reign, at different seasons, in the same breast. The libertine in youth often becomes covetous in old age; and the profane character, when wearied with licentious courses, sometimes assumes that of a religious devotee, hoping to atone for his past transgressions, and to merit a reward by a round of formal duties.

How desperately wicked is the human heart. Sin blinds the understanding and perverts the judgment. Men appear to be wise in every thing but religion. Here, they discover themselves to be very fools, and would be ashamed to act in temporal, as they do in spiritual things. What a convincing proof is this of the truth of Scripture, which declares, that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."*

O! my soul, renounce thy own fancied wisdom, righteousness, and strength, which in the sight of God is foolishness, guilt, and helplessness. Pray for grace to *know thyself,* and to receive the truths of the gospel with the humility and simplicity of a child.

* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

That delightful harmony which exists between the various graces of the Spirit is beautifully set forth in the word of God. Blessed is that soul in which the graces of faith, hope, and love—meekness, humility, and patience—self-denial, long-suffering, and resignation, dwell and flourish. Lord create my heart anew, and make it thy dwelling-place.

It is important to consider every precept in the Bible, as forming a part of the Christian character. The true believer in Jesus is not presented to us in *one entire figure*, in any portion of the Holy Scriptures, but the lineaments of it may be traced throughout the sacred volume, as drawn by the pencil of Eternal Truth.

Thus, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word."* Contrition and poverty of spirit form a part of the believer's character.

"Be thou in the fear of the Lord *all the day long*."† The fear of God is another part of this holy character.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all thine heart*."‡

Love to God is also an essential part of it. And so with every promise to which peculiar dispositions are attached. The blessings promised to the poor in spirit; to them that mourn; to the meek; to those who hunger and thirst after righteousness; to the merciful; to the pure in heart; to the peacemakers; to them who suffer for righteousness' sake, are so many blessings promised to those who have the character of a child of God. The Bible, when read with this view of discovering the full length portrait of the real Christian, affords abundant matter for daily self-examination:—"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." "Watch ye, and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." "If ye love me, keep my commandments." "By this shall

* Isa. lxvi. 2. † Prov. xxiii. 17. ‡ Deut. vi. 5.

all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."* Thus, self-denial, watchfulness, a prayerful spirit, obedience, and brotherly-love, form so many component parts of the Christian character.

Oh! thou blessed Spirit of truth and love draw these sacred lines upon my soul, that I may become more and more like unto Jesus, in the whole frame and disposition of my heart. Fill me with every gracious affection. Subdue every evil, selfish principle and passion, and cause me to grow and abound in all the fruits of righteousness. Lord, renew my soul, and make me a monument of thy grace.

Who can study the Bible with prayer to understand it aright, and not be convinced that all true religion is seated in the heart? Truly to love the Lord Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, is the essence of Gospel holiness, and the perfection of the Christian character. If I love the Saviour in sincerity, my will must be moulded into his, and all my powers become subservient to his glory. The influence of this divine principle will operate on every thought, word, and action. When it does not so operate, it is because this principle has grown weaker, or is opposed by some strongly counteracting evil in my heart. This evil is unbelief, pride, the lust of the flesh, and the love of the world. As this evil predominates, so is the man. If it reign in his heart, he is carnal, and under the wrath of God; if it only rebel, and is not suffered to rule, it marks a character renewed by the Spirit of Grace, struggling with those remnants of corruption which will never cease to harass the believer till death end the warfare, and place the victorious Christian

> "Where sin and flesh no more control
> The sacred pleasures of the soul."

But, the very circumstance of this evil still dwelling within us, calls forth the graces of watchfulness and

* Matt. xvi. 24. Mark xiv. 38. John xiv. 15., & xiii. 35.

prayer. There is no period in the Christian life when watchfulness and prayer become unnecessary. Where can a passage be found, from Genesis to the Revelation, which countenances relaxation in duty, or a freedom from the exercise of vigilance and circumspection? The Bible, on the contrary, is full of exhortations, admonitions, and warnings; declaring that he only who endureth unto the end shall be saved; that if any man look back, God will have no pleasure in him; that he that overcometh shall inherit all things; and that to him, who is faithful unto death, Christ will give the crown of life.

How sweet is a life of faith. Oh! that I could live such a life. It brings along with it holiness and happiness. God, who is the Author of it, is glorified by it, and the good of mankind in general is eminently promoted. A true believer in Jesus loves his Lord and Master; he esteems that day as lost which is not devoted to his service; he deems no sacrifice too great for him, who gave himself a sacrifice for sin; all his mental powers are exercised in the cause of his Redeemer, and when he hears of any good being done, through his feeble instrumentality, he rejoices, and gives God the glory.

Lord enable me thus to feel, thus to act, and thus to live. Undertake for me, that, through thy over-ruling Providence, I may become an humble instrument in thy hands, of promoting the spread of genuine religion. Shed abroad thy love in my heart. Reign the Sovereign of my affections. Make me vigilant and prayerful. Preserve me from unbelief and pride, sensuality and covetousness. Keep my feet in thy paths, and bring me to the kingdom of thy dear Son, there to employ my perfected powers in loving, serving, and adoring thee through the blissful ages of eternity.

XXII.—THE BLESSING OF PEACE.

"Then said Jesus to them again: Peace be unto you."—John xx. 21.

"Fools make a mock at sin." Possessed, it may be, of wealth and power, they glory in their shame, despise the godly, and dare even the vengeance of God. The loud laugh, the shafts of ridicule, the finger of scorn, are contemptuously directed against the humble Christian. The battery of infidelity is opened against his principles and hopes. He is held up as weak in intellect, superstitious in his fears, and unfit to be the associate of a *man of spirit.* But it will not be always so. The time will come when the arrows of the Almighty shall drink up their spirits; and when, awakened to a sense of their danger and of the blessedness of the believer, they shall exclaim—"We fools accounted his life madness, and his end to be without honour: how is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints! Therefore have we erred from the way of truth, and the light of righteousness hath not shined unto us, and the sun of righteousness rose not upon us. We wearied ourselves in the way of wickedness and destruction: yea, we have gone through deserts, where there lay no way: but as for the way of the Lord, we have not known it. What hath pride profited us? or what good hath riches with our vaunting brought us? All those things are passed away like a shadow, and as a post that hasteth by; and as a ship that passeth over the waves of the water, which when it is gone by, the trace thereof cannot be found, neither the pathway of the keel in the waves; or as when a bird hath flown through the air, there is no token of her way to be found, but the light air being beaten with the stroke of her wings, and parted with the violent noise and

motion of them, is passed through, and therein afterwards no sign where she went is to be found; or like as when an arrow is shot at a mark, it parteth the air which immediately cometh together again, so that a man cannot know where it went through. .....The hope of the ungodly is like dust that is blown away with the wind; like a thin froth that is driven away with the storm; like as the smoke which is dispersed here and there with a tempest, and passeth away as the remembrance of a guest that tarrieth but a day. But the righteous live for evermore; their reward also is with the Lord, and the care of them is with the Most High. Therefore shall they receive a glorious kingdom, and a beautiful crown from the Lord's hand: for with his right hand shall he cover them, and with his arm shall he protect them."*

O! that every thoughtless sinner might thus be led to reflect on his own state, and on the blessedness of the despised Christian. In the midst of gaiety and dissipation, the sinner feels a thorn rankling in his bosom. The word of God hath declared it, and it cannot be reversed: "There is no peace unto the wicked." "They are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest." Satan is a hard master, his wages are present and future misery. The sensualist is a *slave* to his lusts. He is bound with fetters. Hurried on by his passions, he plunges from one sin into another, till, satiated with worn-out indulgences, enfeebled in body and mind, seared in his conscience, and hardened in heart, he dies, the wretched victim of his love of sin.

"What scenes of horror and of dread,
Await a sinner's dying bed!
Death's terrors all appear in sight,
Presages of eternal night.
His sins in dreadful order rise,
And fill his soul with sad surprise,

* Wisd. v. 4—16.

Mount Sinai's thunder stuns his ears,
And not one ray of hope appears.
Tormenting pangs distract his breast,
Where'er he turns he finds no rest,
Death strikes the blow—he groans, he cries,
And in despair and horror dies!

"Not so the heir of heavenly bliss,
His soul is filled with conscious peace,
A steady faith subdues his fear,
He sees the heavenly Canaan near.
His mind is tranquil and serene,
No terrors in his looks are seen;
His Saviour's smiles dispel the gloom,
And smooth his passage to the tomb."

Happy believer! who lives in the sunshine of heavenly love; who dies beneath the smiles of the Prince of Peace! To him, what is earth with all its vanities? Thorns and thistles may spring up around him, but they hurt him not. The cares and afflictions of life are sanctified to him, while he looks not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. Under every trial, the peace of God rules in his heart, and fortifies him against the attacks of Satan. Being justified by faith, he has peace with God. Through the power of the Spirit he follows peace with all men; and when called from this world of strife, he enters into peace, into that peaceful region, where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest.

Peace is a precious gift. It is the fruit of the Spirit, the legacy of Christ to his people, the portion of God's children, the promised blessing to his Church. "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children."*

St. Paul styles the Almighty, the God of Peace. Under this endearing title the richest mercies are conveyed. "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."† "The very God of peace

* Isa. liv. 13. † Rom. xvi. 20.

sanctify you wholly."* "The God of peace make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ."† No wonder, then, that the Apostle should close his Epistles with this holy desire: "The God of peace be with you."‡

Our blessed Lord, in his gracious discourse with his disciples, spoke words of peace and love: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you." "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

How true, and yet how supporting to every real believer—"In the world ye shall have tribulation"—"in me ye shall have peace." Tribulation springs from many sources; the malice of wicked men, the assaults of wicked spirits, the corruption of our wicked hearts. Where is the Christian who has not to mourn over the sin that dwelleth in him? Who is not tempted by Satan? Who does not experience the hatred of the world? The more faithful we are to Christ, the more devoted we are to his cause, the more we exhibit his holy image by the holiness of our lives, and the more we shall suffer from the united attacks of men and devils. But oh! precious promise—"*In me ye shall have peace.*" Abiding in Christ by faith, enjoying the indwelling of his Spirit, and resting in our heavenly Father's love, we shall rise superior to every tribulation, like the Alpine traveller who ascends till he leaves the storm beneath his feet.

After his resurrection, Jesus was the same peace-bestowing Saviour. When little expected, the doors being shut for fear of the Jews, Jesus appeared in the midst of his sorrowing disciples, and said unto them, "Peace be unto you." Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord. The loving Redeemer

* 1 Thess. v. 23. † Heb. xiii. 20, 21.
‡ Rom. xv. 33. 2 Cor. xiii. 11. Phil. iv. 9.

said to them the second time, "Peace be unto you." And, as if to show them the abundance of his grace, he appeared again, after eight days, and said, "Peace be unto you." Can we be insensible to such love as this? Oh! that every heart may be softened by the Saviour's love What can exceed the touching history of the resurrection, as given us by St. John, when the question is put, "Lovest thou me?" May all who read these searching words reply, with Peter's warmth and Peter's sincerity, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."

Blessed Jesus! enable me by faith to cleave to thee in every trying hour. When the waves of affliction run high, and threaten to overwhelm my little vessel, may I, through grace, firmly confide in thy power and love. Suffer me not for a moment to doubt thy goodness. Thou, O blessed Saviour, canst be touched with the feeling of my infirmities. Thou, my compassionate High-Priest, wilt plead my cause on high. Pour the balm of consolation into my soul. Strengthen me with faith in thy promises, and do thou in mercy overrule all the vicissitudes of life for my spiritual good. Enable me at all times to look unto thee. Give me grace to perform the duties of to-day, and to leave with thee, in faith, the events of to-morrow. Preserve me, O Lord, from all unreasonable cares and anxieties, knowing that without thee not a sparrow falleth to the ground.

"In me ye shall have peace." Sweet declaration! O! that my heart were filled with thy peace! Adorable Redeemer, take full possession of my soul, that I may be wholly, unreservedly, and for ever thine. Make me a habitation for thyself. I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof; but, O! for thy mercy's sake, dwell in my heart by faith, then shall I experience the joys of thy salvation, and the unutterable blessings of peace and love; then shall I walk before thee in newness of life, and be daily preparing for that new heaven and that new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Sweet is the peace which Christ bestows,
A peace the worldling never knows;
Bless'd *Heart's-ease* on Emmanuel's ground,
Which only near the Cross is found.

Though great my trials, grief, and care,
My Saviour will the burden bear;
His grace and promise never cease,
He kindly utters words of peace.

Let not your troubles make you fear,
Believe in me—I 'm always near;
Though while on earth, you tried shall be,
Yet still, your peace is found in me.

Should waves dash o'er your fragile bark,
And all around be wild and dark,
My word can bid the tempest cease,
And all be calm—and all be peace.

O! precious words of love divine,
What rays of bliss around me shine;
My grateful song shall never cease,
Since Jesus calls Himself my Peace.

XXIII.—THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST.

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."—Eph. iii. 8.

The work of conversion was never more wonderfully displayed than in Saul of Tarsus. The man who thought that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, and persecuting the followers of Christ, even unto death, boldly preached the faith which once he destroyed. From a proud Pharisee, he became, in his own eyes, less than the least of all saints; and from a reviler of the Gospel, and a despiser of the Gentiles, he was made a chosen vessel to proclaim the glad tidings of salva-

tion before kings and rulers, and to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

The heart of Paul was full of the loving-kindness of the Lord!—Language seemed too weak to express his debt of gratitude, or to speak his Saviour's praise. Enlightened by the Spirit of Truth, he saw in Jesus all that was gracious and glorious. Christ was the theme on which he loved to dwell. *Christ crucified* was his glory. In the midst of philosophers, he determined to know nothing but Christ crucified. In the synagogues of the Jews, he feared not to declare, the only foundation of the sinner's hope, the only name whereby he could be saved. Christ crucified was the Alpha and Omega of his commission. He was sent, and he delighted in his mission, to preach both to Jews and Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ.

It had been well for the Christian Church, if all her ministers, in every succeeding age, had drank into the spirit of the Apostle, and made CHRIST CRUCIFIED the great subject of their preaching. Take this Truth away, and the key-stone is removed from the arch. The Church, destitute of this foundation, is built upon the sand. In this Truth, all the prophecies and promises unite: and from this Truth, as from a centre, all the consolations which gladden, and all the divine influences which purify the heart, proceed. The whole of Revelation, before the coming of Christ, was but an unfolding of the Covenant of grace. In the fulness of time Christ appeared as God manifest in the flesh. To him, who is the end of the Law for righteousness, gave all the prophets witness. He died upon the cross. He made an end of sin. He brought in everlasting righteousness. He glorified the Love, Justice, and Holiness of God, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

How unsearchable are the riches of Christ. How wonderful, how surpassing all human conception are the mysteries of grace. Oh! that I could feel my

soul softened under the beams of mercy, which emanate from Eternal love, and shine with so mild a glory in the person of Jesus Christ.

"Stronger his love than death and hell,
Its riches are unspeakable;
The first born sons of light,
Desire in vain its depth to see;
They cannot reach the mystery,
The length, and breadth, and height."

Nothing but sovereign grace and power can save me from sin and hell. When I look into my heart, what do I there behold?—a den of wild beasts—a cage of unclean birds—a nest of vipers—a loathsome sepulchre. Pride turns from the view. Self-love sickens at the sight. Can I recover myself from this abject state. Alas! no! All ability to perform any thing that is good and acceptable to a holy God was lost in Adam, from whom I have derived a nature altogether sinful and corrupt. Power, indeed, I have to provoke my Creator, and to rebel against the sovereignty of God, but none to serve Him aright. What, then, can such a creature expect? Infinite justice demands my destruction to vindicate the holiness of God, whose law I have broken times without number. All excuses fail. In the bitterness of self-reproach I can only confess, that I have destroyed myself, that God is just, that I deserve to feel the heaviest stroke of his righteous indignation.

But, oh! my soul, contemplate the unsearchable riches of Christ, in extending a free unmerited pardon to thee; yea, even to *thee;* promising to blot out all thy sins, if thou wilt only believe in his word and trust in his grace. Lord, enable me to believe, to receive thee by a loving faith; to live upon thee day by day; yea, every fleeting moment, for strength to conquer my corruptions, to subdue my enemies, and to perfect holiness in thy fear. Put forth thy power in my soul. Dispel the mist of ignorance and error. Dissipate the dark cloud of doubts and fears. Arm

me with strength for the performance of every duty, however arduous, and with might to withstand my spiritual foes, however violent their opposition. And oh! divine Saviour, complete the unsearchable riches of thy grace in the consummation of all felicity, even an everlasting deliverance from the guilt and power of sin; an everlasting enjoyment of thy glorious presence in heaven; an everlasting resemblance to all thy moral perfections; an everlasting union to all the blessed saints and angels; an everlasting separation from sorrow, pain, and death. Oh! may these unsearchable riches be my present and future portion! May I know, and love, and serve thee here, and then see thee as thou art, and love and serve thee as I ought, in thy kingdom of bliss and glory.

The unsearchable riches of Christ, which are the portion of every true believer, are neglected, forgotten, or despised by an unbelieving world. Pleasure, wealth, and power, form the world's trinity. Before these idols they bow down in adoration. All their thoughts, time, and talents are employed in their service. No sacrifice is deemed too great to obtain possession of these vanities. Thousands, who call themselves Christians, who have been baptised in the name of Christ, and who make a nominal profession of Christianity, worship these idols which Satan hath set up. Every thing to which we *give the heart*, becomes our idol. This was the sin of the Israelites of old:—They set up their idols in their heart.*

The low views which men in general have of the infinite Holiness of God, is the chief reason why they consider sin as a light thing, and seldom trouble themselves about it till death opens their eyes, and the terrors of hell get hold upon them. Too many, alas! even in their departing moments, feel no bands in their death; but die with the same unconcern in which they lived. The soul-destroying errors of Socinianism spring from this fatal source—inadequate

* Ezek. xiv. 3.

views of the Justice and Holiness of Jehovah, and the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

The Holiness of God is one of his brightest attributes. Mercy may be withheld, as in the case of the fallen angels and impenitent sinners, "He took not on him the nature of angels."* "They are reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day."† "My Spirit shall not always strive with man."‡ Justice, also, may be satisfied, and sheath the sword of vengeance. Christ suffered the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. But holiness cannot be dispensed with. This perfection of Deity is glorified both in the salvation of the believing penitent, and in the destruction of the wicked. "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty," is the angelic note of praise;—the adoring theme of the hierarchy of heaven.

At the Cross of Christ, Holiness shines forth in all its brightness; while love kindly raises the sinner from the lowest depths of wretchedness to the highest seat in glory. "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."—Oh! my soul, stand still and behold the salvation of God. Pray without ceasing, that these unsearchable riches of Christ may extend even to thee. Then shalt thou become a monument of redeeming grace, and mingle thy everlasting praises with the ransomed hosts above.

Blessed Jesus! out of thy fulness may I daily receive wisdom and strength. The riches of thy grace are unsearchable, but not inaccessible. Never can I comprehend the height and depth of thy redeeming love, yet every moment I can taste its sweetness, and feel its sustaining power. Oh! how vast are thy designs, how glorious thy purposes, as revealed in the covenant of grace.—All is infinite. Thy love is an everlasting love. Thy covenant is an everlasting covenant. From everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God. Oh! that my heart may now

* Heb. ii. 16. † Jude 6.

‡ Gen. vi. 3.

commence the never-ending song:—"Worthy is the Lamb." Hallelujah. Amen.

"This God is the God we adore,
Our faithful, unchangeable Friend;
Whose love is as great as his power,
And neither knows measure nor end.
'T is Jesus the First and the Last,
Whose Spirit shall guide us safe home;
We 'll praise him for all that is past,
And trust him for all that 's to come.

XXIV.—AN EVIL HEART OF UNBELIEF.

"If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not."—2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

"Take heed, brethren, lest there be any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."—Heb. iii. 12.

Truly, a heart of unbelief is an evil heart. Out of such a heart every evil proceeds. A bitter fountain cannot send forth sweet water. An unbelieving heart is the laboratory of Satan. "He worketh in the children of disobedience."* Unbelievers are the slaves of Satan: they "are taken captive by him at his will."† When the glorious gospel of our God and Saviour shines around them, they see it not. As the meridian sun is hid from the naturally blind, so is the gospel hid to them that are lost, through the blinding influence of unbelief. Satan, the god of this world, blinds the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Contradictory as it may seem, many virtues, approved by men, may be exhibited by those that are lost. Generosity, sympathy for the afflicted, urbanity

* Eph. ii. 2. † 2 Tim. ii. 26.

of manners, patriotic displays of courage in defence of his country, and such like popular virtues, may form a wreath around the brow, or emblazon the tomb, of the unbeliever. But, what is highly esteemed amongst men is abomination in the sight of God, if faith working by love be wanting in the heart.—The trumpet of fame has sounded the praises of many, even to the ends of the earth, who, at the last trumpet, shall hear these words sounded out before an assembled world: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."*

How empty is the breath of human praise! And yet, how many pant after it, and even risk the salvation of their souls to obtain it.—Oh! that men were wise, that they would consider their latter end! Lord teach me heavenly wisdom. Give me to see and feel, that all true honour cometh from thee. To be thy child, to form a part of thy redeemed church, to know and serve thee in the gospel of thy Son, to esteem Christ precious, and to love him with all the heart, is infinitely above the smile of monarchs, or the plaudits of the world.

What a destructive sin is unbelief. It is like a dungeon in which the prisoner is enclosed without any possibility of escape. Nothing but the mighty power of God can "bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house."† Unbelief is the root of all evil. Its effects upon the soul are of the most deadly nature. The whole human race is tainted with it, yea, is become radically corrupted by it. From Adam to the present time, and from this period to the latest hour of man's existence upon earth, multitudes have been, are, and will be defiled and destroyed, through the subtle poison of unbelief. "When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"‡ We read indeed of brighter days and purer times, when Satan shall be bound for a thousand years; blissful period!

* Matt. xxv. 41. † Isa. xlii. 7. ‡ Luke xviii. 8.

when Christ shall reign in the hearts of his people, as the Universal King; when he shall reign before his ancients gloriously: but soon, alas! does this happy period draw to its close. Satan shall be again loosed out of his prison. He shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth. The enemies of Christ, innumerable like the sand of the sea, shall compass the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city, when fire shall come down from God out of heaven, and devour them.* Wickedness will therefore once more deluge the earth. But He, who is King of kings, and Lord of lords, shall come with his mighty angels in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of his Son. Then will the heavens pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up.† Then will be seen the great white throne and him who sitteth on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven will flee away. Before the King of Glory will then be gathered all nations. The dead, small and great, shall stand before God. The books shall be opened; and the dead will be judged out of those things which are written in the books, according to their works; and whosoever is not found written in the Book of Life, will be cast into the lake of fire.‡

How consoling to the tempest-tossed believer are the words of St. Paul: "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and *the dead in Christ shall rise first:* then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up

* Rev. xx. 8, 9. † 2 Pet. iii. 10. ‡ Rev. xx. 11, 12, 15.

together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."* "THE DEAD IN CHRIST SHALL RISE FIRST." "Blessed and holy is he, that hath part in the FIRST RESURRECTION."† "Seeing then that all these things (which now captivate the hearts of men) shall be dissolved, what manner of persons," writes St. Peter, "ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God? ..... We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."‡

This future glory is of necessity encompassed with clouds. But enough is revealed to animate our hopes, to stimulate our exertions, to inflame our love, to strengthen our faith, though we cannot *chronologically* arrange the glorious events which shall follow each other till the final consummation of all things. Different views are taken, but every view should lead us to the conclusion of St. Peter: "Seeing all these things *shall be dissolved*, what manner of persons ought ye to be in *all holy conversation and godliness?*"

Oh! that I may have grace with deep humility to contemplete this awful, yet, to every believer, delightful period, when Jesus shall come with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; when he shall be surrounded by all those who love his appearing, on whom he will then pronounce the sentence of blessedness, and receive them into the joy of their Lord.

Infidelity is the enemy of man. It robs him of his support, of his consolation, of his hope. It presents before him a dreary waste, at the end of which is nothing but darkness and despair.

Though all are not infidels, properly so called, rejecting the divine inspiration of the Holy Scrip-

* 1 Thess. iv. 14—17. † Rev. xx. 6. ‡ 2 Pet. iii. 11—14.

tures, and scoffing at the revealed plan of salvation through Jesus Christ; yet, all are by nature under the power of unbelief. Thousands, who profess to receive the Bible as the word of God, and who would take offence at being called infidels, act as though they believed not. Whilst they profess that they know God, they in works deny him; whilst they call him Lord, Lord, they do not the things which he commandeth.—It is sad to think how much practical infidelity is concealed under the garb of a religious profession. "They say, and do not."*

Unbelief, like a mighty stream, runs through the whole territory of our fallen world. Its spring is found in Paradise, where our deceived parents ate of the forbidden fruit. As their posterity increased, this river of death grew wider and wider. Wherever a human being is to be found, whatever be his country, language, or colour, there we shall find a portion of this stream, whose pestiferous exhalations destroy the fair beauty of the moral world, and convert the whole earth into a waste howling wilderness.

Blessed be God! there is a river, whose streams make glad the city of God, the Church of the Most High. This river, pure as crystal, proceeds from the fountain of Eternal Love, and flows down to earth through the adorable Redeemer of mankind. When the dreadful flood of unbelief burst forth in Paradise, threatening to overwhelm the new creation, this life-giving stream of Sovereign Love began to flow. A spiritual Eden was graciously commenced. Trees of righteousness were planted and nourished. A people was formed who should show forth the Redeemer's praise. The eleventh chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, most beautifully describes this garden of the Lord. Thousands in every age have borne witness to the truth, by faith and love, by patience and hope; exhibiting in their lives the fruits of the Spirit, and the grace and power of the adorable Saviour.

* Matt. xxiii. 3.

Oh! that I may become one of these highly-favoured plants, that all who are near and dear to me may be trees of righteousness of the Lord's planting, that he may be glorified; yea, that all mankind may bear fruit to the glory of God. If I am a child of God, I shall implicitly believe his holy word. If I truly believe his revealed will, I shall labour through grace to obey it. If I obey it from the heart, my whole walk and conversation will evidence my obedience. I shall then hate what God hates, and love what he loves. I shall not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of my mind. I shall not set my affection on earthly, but on heavenly things. I shall willingly take up my cross and follow Christ, though the path lie through the reproach of men, and tribulation for the gospel's sake.—Knowing that circumcision availeth nothing, nor uncircumcision, but a *New Creature*,* I shall be mainly anxious to experience the power of godliness, whilst maintaining the form.—I shall dread the state of those who rest in a dead formality, who substitute the shadow for the substance, the sign for the thing signified.—"The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."† "The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power."‡

Lord, enable me to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, in all goodness, righteousness, and truth, that I may have a clear and undoubted evidence that I am born from above, redeemed by the blood of Christ, and made a temple of the Holy Ghost. Perform in mercy, this work of love on my soul, through thine own rich grace, and for the sake of that beloved Saviour who died for the chief of sinners, to whom I may look with hope and confidence for pardoning, purifying, glorifying grace. Oh! how great is thine unspeakable, unsearchable love. Like thyself, it is infinite and eternal!—"Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name."

* Gal. vi. 15. † Rom. xiv. 17. ‡ 1 Cor. iv. 20.

XXV.—THE EVIL OF PRIDE.

"God resisteth the proud."—James iv. 6.

THERE are two principles which rule and govern the hearts of natural men,—Pride and sensuality. These two evils are continually in operation, the one, against the soul-abasing, the other, against the soul-purifying, doctrines of the Gospel.

Salvation by grace, through faith in the blood of Christ, is most offensive to the pride of the natural man. The idea of being wholly indebted to another for admission into the kingdom of heaven, is extremely disgusting to self-love. Such an idea is rejected with disdain by every heart, unhumbled and untaught by the Spirit of God. Fallen man wants to have some share in the great work of salvation, to have something whereof to glory. But God hath declared that this shall not be. No flesh shall glory in his presence. "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."*

From this principle of self-righteous pride have arisen all those perversions of the Gospel which have abounded in every age, and which St. Paul so warmly reprobates in his Epistle to the Galatians. It is a principle deeply rooted in our fallen nature, and which nothing but the Holy Spirit can eradicate. It forms a part of that remnant of corruption which believers feel and bewail, and against which they daily fight and pray.—In proportion as it operates, it occasions obscurity in their views of divine truth, and deadness in their affections to spiritual things. It grieves the Holy Spirit, and tarnishes the glory of the Cross. Pride, assuming every form, either worldly or religious, can go with us into our closets, or attend us at the sanctuary.—Like a subtle poison, it can insinuate itself into our prayers and praises.—

* 1 Cor. i. 29, 31.

Unseen, and unsuspected, it mars our best duties, and creates that self-admiration, that desire for human applause, which corrupts the heart, and steals it away from God.

O blessed Jesus, what need have I to look unto Thee for grace and strength. Save me from pride and vain-glory. Often do I feel and lament their baneful influence. If I speak for thee, O, how does the poison work unseen by every eye but Thine! As thou alone canst behold this hidden evil of the heart, so do thou in mercy destroy its influence. To Thee, blessed Saviour, do I look. Thou knowest what is *in man*. Thine eyes are on all my ways. O! wash me in the cleansing fountain of thy precious blood. Purge me from this foul stain of corrupted nature. Make me truly humble and abased before Thee. Convert my soul, then shall I become as a little child in simplicity, teachableness, and humility. The work is all thine own. To Thee be all the praise.

The more exalted views I have of the Holiness and Purity of God, and of the extent and spirituality of the divine Law; the deeper sense I have of the evil of sin, and of the depravity of human nature; the more shall I value the precious doctrine of Justification by faith only, through the blood and righteousness of Christ; the more shall I feel the necessity of the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit, and the more shall I acknowledge salvation to be all of grace, flowing freely from the love of God the Father, displayed in the voluntary sufferings of God the Son, and made savingly known to sinners, through the power of God the Holy Ghost.

But, if I reverse all this,—if I have low views of the divine Holiness, making the Almighty such an one as myself;*—if I consider the Gospel merely as a mitigated law, lowering the standard of holiness, that *all* may be admitted into heaven;—if I have high conceptions of the dignity of human nature, and inadequate views of the evil of sin; in that pro-

* Psa. l. 21.

portion the glory of the Gospel will appear dim in my eyes, the righteousness of Christ will be considered as a make-weight in the scale of human merit, and the operation of the Holy Spirit as nothing more than an auxiliary to the natural powers of man.

The former view exalts the glory of God, and humbles the sinner, whilst holiness is promoted; but the latter, springing from pride, eclipses the splendour of the Deity, obscures the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness, like a dark cloud intervening between us and the orb of day; while the wretched worm of the earth, inflated with pride, sinks into endless woe.

Which of these two statements, I would ask, may we reasonably suppose to be a revelation from God? Let conscience speak. Let the word of truth speak. Let the convinced sinner speak. All will proclaim, "Let God be glorified."

O! what cursed pride dwells in the heart of man. But what will become of proud looks, and proud pretensions, when Christ shall sit on the throne of his glory, and render unto every man according to his works? Then will the contrite soul, who, while on earth was trodden down by the foot of pride, be exalted to the heights of glory; then will the proud sinner, once admired and applauded, be hurled into the depths of hell.

Lord, clothe me with humility. Empty me of all overweening thoughts of myself.—Make Christ more precious to my heart. Draw me to Thyself. Then shall I form a part of thy little flock; and be found amongst thy people, in the day when thou makest up thy jewels.

"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall;"* but, "before honour is humility."† By nature, I am blind to my real state and character. Pride and self-love form an impenetrable veil, which hides me from myself.—Others can see, and point out my defects—Hence arises the value of

* Prov. xvi. 18. † Prov. xv. 33; xviii. 12.

a faithful friend. Blessed Spirit of Holiness, remove the veil, open my understanding, and discover to me the true state of my soul.

It is a fact, in spiritual things, that we never know that we are blind, till we are taught by the Spirit. The Pharisees said to our Lord, "Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We *see*; therefore your sin remaineth."* These very men, who said, "We see," were addressed by our Lord as blind. "Woe unto you, ye blind guides."—"Thou blind Pharisee! cleanse first that which is within."† —It is only when the Spirit opens the eyes of our minds, that we see and feel our ignorance, and can mourn our spiritual darkness. Till then, we fancy ourselves to be very wise and good, notwithstanding we are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and *blind*, and naked. O thou lowly Saviour! impart unto me lowliness of mind. When on earth, "thy voice was not heard in the streets."—Thou didst abstain from every display of thy almighty power, except when called forth in acts of love and pity. All thy miracles were wrought to bless our race, or to manifest forth thy glory. Devils, and diseases fled at thy command; winds were hushed to silence; and the raging waters sank into a calm.—At thy all-powerful voice, the dead arose; and nature, through all her realm, confessed Thee to be the Lord. But man confessed Thee not! The world was made by thee, and the world knew thee not. Thou camest unto thine own, and thine own received thee not. O! give me grace to receive thee in faith and love, that I may have the privilege of becoming a child of God, being born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.—Hide pride from me. Give me a single eye, which aims at nothing but thy glory. Keep me from the proud insinuations of Satan, from the swellings of a corrupt and carnal heart.

* John ix. 40, 41. † Matt. xxiii. 16, 26.

It is of great importance in the Christian life to obtain a right knowledge of ourselves. This can only be obtained by earnest prayer for divine illumination, by a diligent study of the Word of God, and by frequent and impartial self-examination. Whilst thoroughly searching our hearts, we shall find much within us to mortify our pride; but the more we are enabled to discover the hidden evils of our hearts, and to crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts, the more we shall value and delight in the Gospel plan of Salvation. At the Cross of Christ we shall learn to know ourselves, and Him, of whom Moses in the Law, and the Prophets did write. We shall see, in letters of glory, those messages of grace, which proclaim a free pardon and everlasting life to all who believe in, and receive, Christ crucified. Oh! that I could, at this moment, throw wide the doors of a willing mind to admit the Lord of Glory, that he may henceforth reign as King supreme over every affection of my heart. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!

Though the heart be renewed by divine grace, the infection of nature doth remain in them that are regenerated, and too often rebels, notwithstanding the watchfulness and care of the believer. "In me," says St. Paul, "(that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." This indwelling sin may not, through grace, be suffered to break out into open acts of vice, but it struggles and fights within: "When I would do good, evil is present with me." "I find a law in my members, warring against the law of my mind."* This inbred evil excites to pride, sloth, spiritual indifference, earthly-mindedness, fleshly lust, self-confidence, carnal ease, and a thousand other evils destructive to our peace, and grieving to the good Spirit of our God.

To whom, then, can I look for deliverance from these evils, but to Him who hath said, "My grace is sufficient for thee." "A new heart will I

* Rom. vii. 18, 21, 23.

give you, and a new spirit will I put within you."* This is the great and gracious promise of the New Covenant, for which I am encouraged to pray in the name, and through the merits, of the blessed Jesus. Lord, vouchsafe this blessing, the earnest of every other blessing which flows to our ruined world through the death and intercession of thy dear Son.

XXVI.—ON HYPOCRISY,—AND DEADNESS TO THE WORLD.

"Ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."—Matt. xxxiii. 28.

"Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."—Col. iii. 3.

The Bible addresses the hypocrite, and the sincere worshipper of God, in words which cannot be misunderstood. Each is painted in his true colours, by that hand which cannot err. He who looketh at the heart cannot be deceived by outward appearances. He sees through the veil which conceals the motive from our view. Man may deceive his fellow-man, and often does. That charity which hopeth all things forbids mistrust, till facts expose a character which even charity can no longer screen. How often is religion wounded in the house of her friends. The falls of the sincere, as well as the scandals of hypocrites, give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, and bring a reproach upon that Gospel, whose command is, "Abstain from all appearance of evil."†

There is scarcely a grace in the true believer, which does not find its counterfeit in the hypocrite. A hypocrite is nothing but a semblance of something excellent. He sustains a part, and personates a

* Ezek. xxxvi. 26. † 1 Thess. v. 22.

character, which is not his own. Were there no excellencies in religion, or were those excellencies not held in estimation, there would be no hypocrites. Hence we find, in seasons of fiery persecution, but few, if any, who will be hardy enough to risk their worldly interest, ease, or reputation, to obtain a name which is branded with obloquy, and followed by death. But when religion obtains credit in the world, when the profession of it raises a person in the general esteem, and when it opens the door to some valuable place, or preferment, then these hypocrites abound, like summer flies, fluttering in the beams of the mid-day sun.

If we may use an old adage,—"All is not gold that glitters." There is a living faith, and a dead faith; a blessed hope, and a false hope; a fervent love, and a verbal affection; "with their mouth they show much love;"* a filial fear, and a slavish fear; a spiritual joy, and animal excitement; a peace which passeth understanding, and a delusive peace; a godly sorrow, and a worldly sorrow, which worketh death; a genuine humility, and an hypocritical humiliation. We read also of a desire to be something when we are nothing; and of a vain endeavour to appear fair in the eyes of men, and yet, to stand, on acceptable terms with the Great Searcher of hearts.

Alas! that we should take such pains to impose upon ourselves, and deceive others. Wretched, indeed, is our state, when insincerity and deception are hourly needed to prevent exposure and contempt. Truly pitiable is that man, who, conscious of his falls, and dreading to have them known, is alive to every whisper. Oh! how invaluable is simplicity and godly sincerity; a heart full of the love of Christ, and a life on which slander cannot *justly* breathe! Such an one is conscious of much evil over which to lament. He mourns in secret, with Daniel, over his transgressions; with Paul, over the sin which warreth in his members; with Isaiah, he

* Ezek. xxxiii. 31.

cries out, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips;"* and with Peter, "I am a sinful man, O Lord."† But before men his walk is blameless. He shines as a light in the world. He dares to be singular, though made a by-word and a proverb of reproach.

Lord, have mercy upon me, a poor, fallen, miserable sinner! Oh! suffer me not to lie on the couch of carnal security, or to be bound by the chains of that false hope and false peace, which Satan throws around the souls of countless millions. Without thy almighty power I must perish; for nothing, O blessed Jesus, but thy grace can rescue my soul from death and hell. When I look into my heart, I may well turn from the sight. What swarms of evils do I discover, unknown and unseen by the world. I do indeed loathe and abhor myself. O give me grace to repent before thee in dust and ashes. I sigh for deliverance. I long for thy presence. I want the enjoyment of thy favour. It appears like winter in my soul. Darkness covers me. I know, and precious is the knowledge, that Thou, O blessed Jesus, art the Saviour and Friend of sinners. Be pleased to say, "I am thy salvation," and the joyful tidings conveyed by the Holy Spirit to my soul, will cause light, and life, and joy, and gladness, to abound within me. Methinks I hear the distant sound of mercy sweetly advancing towards me; oh! let me believe, and not despair. Let me trust, and not be afraid. Let me lie at the foot of thy Cross, and there behold thy bleeding wounds, till every wound in my soul be healed, and all be holiness and peace within.

As the hypocrite lives *for the world*, so does the true believer live *unto God*. The one is ever seeking the praise of men; the other, the approbation of God his Saviour. The hypocrite's hope perishes with the earth; the hope of the believer will be realised when sublunary things shall have passed away. O!

* Chap. vi. 5. † Luke v. 8.

that I could feel my heart dead to all things here below, and alive only unto God.

This desire to die unto all things here below, may appear to many, to be inconsistent with our natural state, as inhabitants of earth, where various objects require our close attention, and call forth continual application: where relative duties demand our anxious care; and public duties our active labours. Yet still the desire is Christian. "*Ye are dead*, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

Without this spiritual deadness to the world, I shall never be able rightly to fulfil the duties which God requireth of me. A heart, glued to the world, a heart enchained by its pleasures, profits, and cares; a heart, in which the world sits enthroned, can never be a heart acceptable unto God. Such a heart can never serve God and Mammon. Two masters so opposite in their commands, can never, by the same servant, be wholly and universally obeyed. A man might as readily hope to reach the North Pole, while steering towards the south, as to think of attaining to the favour of God, whilst seeking, with all his powers, the favour of the world.

The first and great commandment is,—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart."* But how can I even aim at this high command, if created objects have the upper, or equal place in my affections? To be dead to the world, is to be weaned from it; to live above it, and not to be captivated by it. This deadness to the world may exist with the greatest vitality, as regards the fulfilment of relative duties. I may be all alive and active in the performance of duties which are more immediately connected with the world, and yet, at the same time, as respects my heart and affections, be dead to it. Oh! this is a great attainment—to be *in* the world, and yet not *of* the world. Without this, I cannot be a Christian. Jesus said to his disciples, "If ye were *of the world*, the world would

* Matt. xxii. 37.

e his own: but because ye are *not of the world*, t I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the rld hateth you."* And in his intercessory prayer, I have manifested thy name unto the men which ou gavest me out of the world." "I pray for m: I pray not for the world, but for them which ou hast given me." "I have given them thy word; d the world hath hated them, because they are not the world.....I pray not that thou shouldest take m out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep m from the evil. They are not of the world, even I am not of the world."† To be, then, a *worldly ristian*, is a contradiction in terms. Nothing can more evident than this: that every true disciple Christ, like his Lord and Master, is not of the rld. He is different in spirit and in practice. As sus went about doing good, so do his faithful rvants. Avoiding the superstitious abstractions of nkish indolence, and the distracting pursuits of minal Christians, the true believer, with his heart heaven, labours with prayerful zeal to glorify, in ry station, his God and Saviour.

If it be asked—How can this be done? The ly is ready. Through the grace and power of rist, sought for by diligent prayer. Oh! how couraging is the Saviour's command: "Ask, and shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find." "All ngs whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, shall receive."‡ Faith, working by love, faith, ercoming the world, will set all inferior objects in ir due place and order. A heart, in which Christ gns, knows well how to estimate the vanities of e, and the glories of eternity: as the artist can preciate the exquisite touches of the master, while passes by the rude attempts of the scholar.

The second great commandment is:—"Thou lt love thy neighbour as thyself."§ This command lls forth, at once, all the energies of the mind, and

* John xv. 19. † John xvii. 6, 9, 14—16.
‡ Matt. vii. 7; xxi. 22. § Matt. xxii. 39.

all the best feelings of the heart. This beautiful order of the commandments is most important. When I can love God supremely, then I place the world and all things in it at the foot of his throne, and look unto, and worship, and place all my dependence upon, and seek all my happiness from, God and God alone. This is to honour him, in some humble measure, from whom I have received my being, and on whose will I every moment depend.

When I can love my neighbour as myself, with a pure heart fervently, then selfishness is destroyed, that weed of fallen nature, which so rankly covers the soil of the natural heart, and chokes the good seed which may be sown upon it.—Alas! when I examine my affections, and all the secret springs which move and guide my outward actions, what cause have I to be humbled and confounded before my Almighty Creator! What spiritual idolatries, what backslidings in heart, what worldly motives, what wandering affections, what selfish principles, what evils of every name, too often rise and rebel in the heart of the true believer!—He groans, being burdened. He cries out—"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"*

Lord! purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean. Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Sprinkle my conscience with the atoning blood of Jesus. Elevate my motives, spiritualise my affections, and wean me from the world. Thou canst supply my every want out of thy fulness. Blessed Lord, I want to love thee supremely, and my neighbour as myself. I want to be made conformable to thy Will, to be renewed after thine Image. O, perform this great, this gracious, work upon my soul. Deliver me from all iniquity. Purify my heart by faith, and fill me with holy, heavenly love, to the praise of thine own everlasting grace, through Jesus Christ my Saviour.

* Rom. vii. 24.

XXVII.—HUMAN CORRUPTION AND ABOUNDING GRACE.

"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."—Rom. v. 20.

All orthodox Christians agree in the doctrine of the Fall; that the whole human race fell in Adam, as their federal head; and that we are by nature the children of wrath. They agree in this truth, that death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned, and therefore lie under condemnation, and are exposed to the righteous judgment of God. The Scriptures are most clear on this awful subject.

This doctrine militates against the pride of our darkened understandings, and the boasted morality of the world. Some treat it as monstrous, others as fanatical. But all, who are taught of God, receive it in deep self-abasement. Lord give me grace to embrace, in the simplicity of faith, all those humbling truths of thy holy word, which, at once, crucify self-love, and prepare the heart to receive Jesus as the only Saviour from guilt and condemnation.

The doctrine of the Fall and its direful consequences, may, in some small degree, be exemplified by what we witness around us. In how many families are certain maladies perpetuated, which are styled *hereditary*, descending from father to son, yea, even to children's children. How frequently have the profligacy and prodigality of parents entailed upon their posterity disease and want. What millions of our fellow-creatures have groaned from age to age under the iron yoke of one bloody conqueror. The conquests of Mahomet have to this day held in bondage the Christian churches in the East, while the spiritual despotism of Popery enslaves its millions in the West.

When I compare the present state of man with his original formation:—when I view him as he once

was, perfect in holiness, peace, and love; and as he now is, full of iniquity, disquietude, and enmity, I feel the force of my Saviour's words to Nicodemus: "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." When I contemplate the Almighty Creator in all his infinite perfections, and man in all his vileness; when I survey the spotless mansions of glory, and the polluted habitations of earth; I am constrained to say, Amen, to my Saviour's declaration, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

Let me well observe this important truth, I must be born again, not of water only, but of the Spirit. What does this teach me?—Surely that a great change must necessarily take place, before a mass of corruption can be made meet to inherit incorruption. The change is great, but the power which effects it is omnipotent. The cause of this change is the sovereign love of God. With Him this blessedness originated, and by Him it is performed, otherwise it could not be said, "By grace are ye saved;"* "Salvation is of the Lord." The means for effecting this change were ordained by infinite wisdom, and are revealed and applied to a lost world through the Holy Ghost. The end of this change was designed by the Father of mercies, to display the divine perfections, to destroy the powers of darkness, and to diffuse unnumbered blessings, in time and eternity, through the redemption of sinners by the death and glorification of His beloved Son. Oh! how transporting will the heavenly anthem be! "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."†

Lord! be graciously pleased to effect this unspeakably blessed change in my soul. I have daily to mourn over an evil heart of unbelief. I feel so much of self, mixing with my better motives; so much of earth, mixing with my spiritual duties; so

* Eph. ii. 8. † Rev. v. 12.

much of distrust and slavish fear, mixing with my professed faith in thee, that I may well exclaim with Job, "I abhor myself."*

Lord! undertake for me. Hold thou me up and I shall be safe. Create in me a new and contrite heart. Wash away all my corruptions. Cover me with thy spotless righteousness, and make me meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Lord enable me daily to come unto thee, to spread my wants, and sorrows, and sins before thee; yea, to lay them all by faith at the foot of the Cross, where grace, and mercy, and truth unite to save, and bless such a hell-deserving sinner as I am. Oh! how sweet is thy call of love: "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."† "Look unto me, and be ye saved."‡ "Be not afraid, only believe."§—Lord enable me to come on the warrant of thy word: for thou hast said, "Him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out."‖ Make my soul joyful in thy salvation. Put a new song into my mouth, even a Psalm of thanksgiving unto my God.

How deadly are the fruits which unbelief produces:—Insensibility to eternal things; the alienation of the heart from God; a love for carnal delights. We naturally turn away from that which never captivates our affections. We choose darkness rather than light, because our deeds are evil.

The only obstacle to loving God supremely, arises from the rebelliousness of our will to his holy law, and from an aversion to the humbling method of salvation, as revealed in the Gospel. This state of mind constitutes our guilt in his sight, and renders us deservedly the objects of his wrath.

Every day I have to mourn over this spiritual insensibility. I want to feel my heart all alive to God. I want to feel my soul melted with godly sorrow, and expanded with holy joy. I want to experience that indescribable emotion of contrition

* Chap. xlii. 6. † Matt. xi. 28. ‡ Isa. xlv. 22.
§ Mark v. 36. ‖ John vi. 37.

and peace which sweetly blends in the heart of the penitent believer, and excites the soul to praise, even when the eye is moistened with the tear of grief. Sorrow for sin, and joy in the Saviour, form that peculiarity of feeling which a stranger intermeddleth not with. Lord! may I daily know more of it. Give me a saving knowledge of thyself, and a growing taste for spiritual blessings.

All the angelic beings are under the perpetual influence of the highest love and reverence for God, and all of them delight to do his will. All the spirits of just men made perfect in heaven, are actuated by the same exalted principle of love. The Church on earth is taught by her divine Lord to pray, "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." The families in heaven and earth are *one*.*

If, then, a soul under the influence of this guilty disinclination of heart to love and serve God, should, in such a state, be called out of time into eternity, how could it be fit for the society of saints and angels, whose bosoms burn with everlasting love? How could such a soul enter into their enjoyments or employments? Heaven would present a blank. It would be no place of happiness to such a soul. Every thing around it would run counter to the evil principle within; and hence it is evident that, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

There are few delusions which men more successfully practice upon themselves than this:—the hope of going to heaven when they die. This, like some healing plaster, is universally applied to ease the conscience. No matter how evil the life may be; Satan still whispers, as he did of old,—"Ye shall not surely die."† The sinner, trusting in the father of lies, goes on in his wickedness; thinks that God is too merciful to punish through eternity, the frailties committed in time; and that all will end well at the last. Hell is truth seen too late.

* Eph. iii. 15. † Gen. iii. 4.

O, my soul, pray without ceasing to be saved om these wiles of Satan; from this wretched state alienation from God. The more I meditate on is important subject, the more I see the necessity r my being made a New Creature in Christ Jesus, fore I can possibly relish or delight in the pur-ased possession. Many are apt to suppose, they ust necessarily be happy, if they can only gain lmittance into the celestial city, without consider-g what constitutes the bliss of heaven. Without ve to God, without a delight in his service, with-t a hatred of sin, heaven would be no heaven, uld they be admitted into it. The pure in heart all see God. "Without holiness no man shall see e Lord." Vain, then, are the hopes of the hypo-ite. Nothing can enter the unsullied regions of lory, that worketh abomination or maketh a lie. gainst such, the door will be for ever shut. Lord, new my soul in righteousness. Give me a delight do thy will. Guard me against the deceitful orkings of unbelief. Enable me to resist the wiles the devil. Shine upon my path, and guide me, thy Spirit, to the realms of glory.

"Where sin abounded, grace did much more ound."* Blessed declaration! Had it not been , wretched would our condition now have been! Ve should have lain in the darkness of despair, aiting for the blackness of darkness for ever! But, ght has sprung up; the voice of mercy is heard, d sinners may rejoice in God their Saviour. The od of all grace invites us to the mercy-seat. The pirit of Grace conducts us thither. "As many as e led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of od."†

How wonderful is the work of grace in the art. It is a progressive work. It springs from od, and leads to God. The first operation of the pirit in the soul of the sinner is LIGHT. "God, ho commanded the light to shine out of darkness,

* Rom. v. 20. † Rom. viii. 14.

hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."* This light being a spiritual, searching light, produces conviction of the evil and turpitude of sin. This CONVICTION being of an awakening, softening nature, causes the feeling of deep contrition on account of original and actual transgression. CONTRITION, when abiding, leads to confession, to an humble, heartfelt acknowledgment of guilt and misery. CONFESSION, when flowing from a believing view of the Cross of Christ, ends in a blessed CONVERSION of soul to God, an entire surrender of the heart to him who claims it. When conviction, contrition, confession, and conversion, have formed the new creature in Christ Jesus, through the power of the Holy Ghost, then comes CONSOLATION,—a loving spirit; a joyful spirit. Consolation being of a strengthening nature, produces CONFIRMATION in the ways of God, stability and strength. "The joy of the Lord is our strength."† The whole ends in a full and final CONSUMMATION of all blessedness in the region of celestial glory.

How precious are the ascending steps from earth to heaven. How glorious is the work of grace in the soul of man. Here wisdom, power, and love, are richly displayed. Pride has no share in this blessedness. God is the Author and Finisher of Salvation. To Him be all the praise throughout all ages. Amen and Amen.

XXVIII.—INDWELLING SIN.

"If I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."—Rom. vii. 20.

SIN, in all its forms, is hateful to God. He beholds it with abhorrence, and hath declared that "the soul

* 2 Cor. iv. 6. † Nehem. viii. 10.

sinneth it shall die."* All men are dead under law, because all have sinned; and had not God ously sent his dear Son into the world to pay enalty due to sin, and to die the just for the t, the whole human race must have perished stingly. Even now, none shall be saved, who the blessing of a preached Gospel, and of the tures of Truth vouchsafed to them, except repent and believe in Jesus, are born from above, walk before God in newness of life. The state e heathen, who have never heard the joyful l, and to whom Christ is unknown, will be right- determined by Him, all whose ways are judg- and whose paths are equity and truth. Enough ealed, to awaken our fears respecting them, to quicken our endeavours, to make known them that Saviour, who so graciously said to of Tarsus, "I have appeared unto thee for urpose, to make thee a minister and a witness of these things which thou hast seen, and of things in the which I will appear unto thee; ering thee from the people, and from the *Gen- unto whom now I send thee;* to open their eyes, o turn them from *darkness* to *light*, and from *ower of Satan unto God;* that they may receive eness of sins, and inheritance among them which nctified, by faith that is in me."† How clearly state of the heathen described by the Saviour e world.

In unison with this message to Saul, was that to all the Apostles just before the ascension of Lord. "Go ye into all the world, and preach ospel to *every creature.*"‡ "Go ye therefore, each *all nations*, baptising them in the name of ather, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; ing them to observe all things whatsoever I have anded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, unto the end of the world."§

zek. xviii. 4. † Acts xxvi. 16—18. ‡ Mark xvi. 15.
§ Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

Had the ignorance of the Gentiles been their *security*, this message need not to have been delivered. The very words of Christ convey the strongest expression of danger, and the necessity for his being declared—THE ONLY SAVIOUR OF SINNERS—to the ends of the earth.

It is not uncommon to hear persons speak of the comparative safety of the heathen, since they cannot reject what is not offered, nor disbelieve what is not made known unto them. Thus, many excuse themselves from aiding Missionary Societies, as if we were carrying a curse instead of a blessing to the Gentiles, inasmuch as their guilt will be greater by refusing the offered Saviour.

This reason would equally have operated against the coming of Christ into our world, because all men have not faith, and millions, to whom the Gospel is preached in vain, will perish! Unbelief lies at the bottom of these objections. How different were the feelings of the angelic host on their announcement of the Saviour's birth to the shepherds, when they sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."* How different were those of Paul when he wrote to the Ephesians.—"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."†

Oh! that my heart may be warmed with love to the Saviour, and with a tender concern for the perishing millions of mankind. Blessed Lord, let me never desire to be wise above what is written, or to set my reason against thy Wisdom, or my will, against thy Sovereignty. May I receive the Gospel by a loving faith, and labour to make it known with a loving heart. Thou hast said, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will *send forth* labourers into his harvest."‡ Enable me to offer up this prayer, for the extension of thy kingdom,

* Luke ii. 14. † Chap. iii. 8. ‡ Matt. ix. 37, 38.

nd for the increase of faithful ministers, in reliance n thy grace, and in dependence on thy power. Oh ! asten thy kingdom, accomplish the number of thine lect, and fill the earth with thy glory.

Those who believe the Gospel, who receive hrist into their hearts by faith, ascribe all their lvation to sovereign grace. They are made the mples of the Holy Ghost, and serve God with elight in the Gospel of his Son. But whilst they main in the body, they must struggle against the mainders of sin.

Sickness, adversity, unkind treatment, persecu- on, with various other ills of life, are not joyous, ut grievous; yet, God, is often pleased to bring his ildren into these furnaces, to purify them from e dross of sin, and to make them instrumental in roducing the peaceable fruits of righteousness to the lory of his grace.* But sin is ever abhorrent to a oly God, and distressing to a renewed mind. Can e believer, then, derive any benefit from the sin hich he hates, and against which he hourly com- ats? These Canaanites in the land, though griev- us to the spirit of a true Israelite, as thorns are to s flesh, may be *overruled* by Infinite Love to teach m many lessons.

First,—They remind him of his former condi- on, of the rock from whence he was hewn, and of e hole of the pit from whence he was digged; of s natural depravity, wretchedness, and misery, that , he may loathe himself in his own sight.

Second,—They constrain him to acknowledge e grace of God in saving him, when he had nothing expect but fiery indignation and judgment without ercy.

Third,—They make him distrust himself, through e constant experience of his own weakness in resist- g the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Fourth,—They cause him to trust altogether in e divine power of his Saviour, from the repeated

* Heb. xii. 11.

victories which he obtains over indwelling sin, by looking with a single eye to Jesus, the Captain of his salvation.

Fifth,—They bring into exercise the graces of faith and patience, courage and self-denial, watchfulness and prayer. The weapons of his warfare are not suffered to rust, having daily to fight the good fight of faith.

Sixth,—They make him value the blood and righteousness of Christ, which rise in value, in proportion to the true and saving knowledge which he acquires of himself. Thus, the more he is convinced of his sins and imperfections, the more earnestly does he seek after a better righteousness to justify him in the sight of God, even the spotless righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Seventh,—They make him long more ardently for the rest which remaineth for the people of God; for that pure world, where sorrow cannot enter, where indwelling sin will never harass the soul, but where he will for ever behold his adorable Redeemer, and be made like him, when he shall see him as he is.

Indwelling sin, thus uniformly opposed, hated, and watched against, and more and more overcome and rooted out of the soul, shall not be suffered to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. The promise is most precious to every true believer: "Sin shall not have dominion over you."*

Blessed Jesus! grant that sin may be increasingly hateful to my soul, as it is hurtful to my peace. Enable me to grow in all the graces of the Spirit, resisting the motions of sin in my flesh, and crucifying every evil affection and lust, till I lay my body in the grave, and ascend to Thee, my life and my all, my treasure, and my eternal home.

* Rom. vi. 14.

XXIX.—THE INWARD CONFLICT.

"To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not."—Rom. vii. 18.

How varied is the life of the true believer. At one time on the mount, at another time in the valley. Sometimes he can rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, at other times, he groans being burdened, and is almost tempted to say with David —"I shall perish one day by the hand of Saul."*

There are seasons of peculiar mental distress with which the tried believer is alone acquainted. At such a season, it seems as if Satan were let loose upon his soul to agonise it with his fiery darts; as if the foul sediment of inbred corruption were stirred up from the very bottom of his heart.

When the Christian would fondly enjoy the tranquil delights of peace and spiritual consolation, how often is he constrained to say—

"Instead of this, he made me feel,
The hidden evils of my heart,
And let the angry powers of hell
Assault my soul in every part."

Can he be easy under such distressing experience? Oh! no.

"Lord, why is this, I trembling cried,
Wilt thou pursue thy worm till death?"

Hear, O my soul, the gracious answer, so accordant with the revealed word:—

"'T is in this way,' the Lord replied,
"'I answer prayer for grace and faith.'"

If thou shouldest ask: Why *in this way* so painful to endure?—

"These inward trials I employ,
From self and pride to set thee free,

* 1 Sam. xxvii. 1.

And break thy schemes of earthly joy,
That thou mayest seek thy all in me."

This is indeed a trying dispensation; but even this inward conflict, painful as it is, is often sanctified to us by that divine Spirit, who can turn our darkness into light, and make crooked things straight. What Satan intends for evil, the God of love and power can overrule for good.

When the believer, through neglect of watchfulness and prayer, has fallen into a state of spiritual apathy; when the cursed leaven of self-love and self-righteousness have secretly been working their way into his duties; when the world has, by insensible degrees, got a hold upon his heart: then *some sudden assault of the Devil* sets his soul in alarm. Awakened by his fears, he is driven to earnest prayer. His rebel lusts, now in arms, and led on by Satan, threaten to overcome him. Terrified, and overwhelmed at the sight of his sins, and at his utter inability to help himself, he cries out in the agony of his soul: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"* He loathes and abhors himself. He seeks for pardoning mercy at the cross of Christ. And there he obtains forgiveness, and comes off more than conqueror, through him who loved him and gave himself for him. "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ,"† is his song of triumph.

The believer, by these repeated struggles, is convinced of his constant liability to Satan's temptations; of the proneness of his heart to depart from God; and of his daily need of sanctifying, sustaining grace. His language now is:—

"Prone to wander, Lord I feel it,
Prone to leave the God I love;
Here 's my heart, Lord, take and seal it,
Seal it from thy courts above."

* Rom. vii. 24. † 1 Cor. xv. 57.

y trials inward and outward, the children of God e taught, that this is not their rest, because it is olluted; that they are travelling through an enemy's untry; that they must fight their way to glory, good soldiers of Jesus Christ, remembering that e, and he only who overcometh, shall obtain the own.

"Not folded hands nor slackness of the mind,
Can promise for the safety of mankind;
Man's is laborious happiness at best,
His joys are joys of conquest, not of rest."

Happy is he who learns wisdom from his own ials, and those of others. O! that my spiritual mour may be always bright. Indolence and supine-ss is the rust which blunts the edge of the sword, d gives the enemy an advantage over us. I know at my foes are mighty, but my Redeemer is almighty. know that I am weak, but my Saviour's grace is l-sufficient. O! that I had faith, strong faith, to y hold upon his promised aid. Then should I put y enemies to flight; for the encouragement to the ghting Christian is, "Resist the devil, and he will e from you."* Let me never forget, that if I yield a small temptation, the enemy will present one ore powerful, as my spiritual strength will be eakened to resist it. Thus, by degrees, and often pidly, the unwatchful Christian is hurried into ghtful sins.

God willeth not the death of a sinner. He illeth not that any should perish. His pathetic xclamation by the Prophet is—"Why will ye die?"† low strange, that any creature should be so infatu-ted, as to reject the gracious offers of pardon and eace, when God incarnate, crucified and slain, and ow risen and glorified, stands with stretched-out arms, with arms of love and pity, to receive and bless us for ever! Yet such a creature am I. O my soul,

* James iv. 7. † Ezek. xviii. 31; xxxiii. 11.

be ashamed and confounded in the dust. Thou, even thou, wouldest still reject this bleeding love, if God himself had not *first* loved thee, and drawn thy affections through the sweetest, softest influence, to choose Him for thy portion, and seek thy all in Him. O! wondrous Love! O! love beyond degree! Lord, shed more and more of this love abroad in my heart. Give me more of thy blessed Spirit's grace and influence. Subdue my rebel lusts. Preserve me from the attacks of Satan, from self-sufficiency and pride. Keep me humble, watchful, and thankful; pure, meek, and holy. Defend me from the contagion of a wicked world, from the fear of man, from all dissimulation, hypocrisy, and deceit. Make me simple and sincere, upright and without guile before thee. Cause me to abound yet more and more in knowledge, faith, and love, till all my powers are perfected in glory.

Sin is the dishonour, the disease, the death of the soul. It brings, in this world, disgrace and condemnation; and in the next, shame and everlasting torment. O! how I long for entire sanctification. Blessed Jesus, thou alone canst wash away my crimson sin. Nothing but thy precious blood can remove the foul pollution. To thee I come, to the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. Lord, plunge me beneath this sacred flood, that I may come out of it pure and clean.

O! Almighty Purifier, thou eternal Spirit of Holiness, sit upon my soul as a refiner's fire. Kindle a flame of love in my heart, that may burn to thy glory. Give me to see the preciousness of Jesus, his beauty and adorable perfections. Enable me to walk in his footsteps, to copy his example, to delight in his commandments. Root out of my heart all pride and worldly lust, and implant in their stead, humility and a heavenly mind. Give me a relish for spiritual employments, holy meditation, and fervent love.

"Faint, yet pursuing,"* was the state of Israel

* Judges viii. 4.

f old. I feel my spiritual weakness. How difficult is to have the mind wholly fixed upon God. The louds are not so shifting, nor the winds so fleeting, as ıy thoughts. I try to fix them upon heavenly things; or a few moments they seem to settle upon objects of ternal interest, and then they slide insensibly away, ill starting as from a reverie, I am grieved to find, ıat my thoughts have wandered to the ends of the arth. O! the deceitfulness and instability of the eart!

Blessed Jesus, bind my heart to thy Cross with ıe cords of love. Let not the enemy allure my affec- ions from thee, or fill my mind with vain imagina- ions. Let me be wholly taken up with thee. Enable ıe to keep eternity in view; to live and act as one ho must shortly appear in thy presence. O blessed xpectation to the true believer! Do I love thy ppearing? Am I longing to behold thee without veil between? Then shall I be admitted into thy resence, where is fulness of joy. But, have I truly elieved on the Son of God? Am I united by faith) the living Vine? Do I daily receive the vivifying ıp, the grace of the Saviour, that I may bear the uits of holiness? Has the Spirit sealed me unto ıe day of redemption?

Blessed Lord! make this sure to my soul by thy ıward work of grace, and by my outward conformity) thy will. I wait upon thee. Thou hast promised) bless the waiting soul. Thy word is truth. Then will trust and not be afraid, for Thou, Thou only, rt my salvation.

"To will is present with me; but how to perform ıat which is good I find not." What swarms, not nly of wandering but of foolish thoughts crowd into ıe mind, when we want to be abstracted from the orld and wrapt up in holy meditation. All this roves the depravity of the heart, and shows what orrupt creatures we must appear in the sight of od, when we appear so vile in our own.

What a blessing it is to know that this spiritual

malady may be healed; that Jesus came into the world to save the lost. All are sick unto death. All are lost. But Jesus, the kind Physician, the good Shepherd, is come to raise the dead, and to restore the lost. Hasten, then, O sinner, to this adorable friend. He hath said, "Come unto me," yea, he hath given thee this blessed assurance, that him that cometh, he will in no wise cast out.* Why then, this backwardness to come to Jesus? He is the tenderest of Friends, the most ready of Benefactors. Let him not have to say in thy case, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."†

Ah! but he hath declared—"No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him."‡ And why canst thou not come? It arises, not from any secret decree which foreordains thy destruction, and presents an impenetrable barrier to thine approach to the Saviour; but it springs altogether from thyself. Unbelief, pride, prejudice, the love of sin, and the love of the world, the fear of man, and carnal security, keep thee from closing in with the offers of salvation. In the day of judgment every mouth shall be stopped, and the whole world shall become guilty before God. No excuses will then be made, which now pacify the conscience. No pleas will then be put forward in arrest of judgment, which now lull the sinner to sleep on the lap of carnal security. All shall then acknowledge the justice of the sentence: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."§

Remember, O sinner, that the very circumstance of thy not being able to come of *thyself* to the gracious Saviour, proves thee to be a child of the Fall, and in a state of guilt and misery, since it arises solely from the rebelliousness of thy will, and the total alienation of thy heart from God. Beware, then, lest thou make this moral inability, which is the fruit of

* John vi. 37. † John v. 40. ‡ John vi. 44.
§ Matt. xxv. 41.

the Fall, an excuse for keeping thee away from Christ. Rather say, I *cannot*, because I *will not*. My stubborn will, like a chain, binds me to sin and Satan, and nothing but almighty power can set me free. Under this deep conviction of thy lost and undone condition, cry fervently to the compassionate Saviour, that he would plead his precious blood in thy behalf before the eternal throne, that the Father of mercies may send the Holy Ghost into thy heart, to lead thee to the Cross; and there by uniting thee to the blessed Jesus, cause thee to triumph over the world, the flesh, and the devil, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God.

This is the way, the only way to obtain peace and purity, when pardon is sealed to the conscience by the Holy Ghost. Yes! when Jesus says, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee," then the Comforter sheds abroad the love of God in the heart; a sweet peace is enjoyed in the soul, and purity reigns within. O! how happy is such a believer. Worlds cannot purchase his inestimable blessings. He beholds the treasures of earth as the dust beneath his feet, when he compares them with the love of his Saviour, and an assured hope of heaven.

Lord give me this willing heart to come to thee; this humble faith to receive thee; this holy love to rejoice in thee; this full assurance of hope that I shall reign with thee for ever. Then will my joy be full; I shall glory in tribulation, and daily experience the felicity of Paul, which his own words so feelingly express, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."*

Inward calmness I desir'd,
Hope, this pleasing dream, inspir'd,
Long, I sought from earth to gain,
Joy, which earth could not contain.

Conscience fill'd me with dismay,
Fear consum'd me night and day;

* Phil. i. 21.

All my sins, before me spread,
Seized my soul with guilty dread.

More, I panted for repose,
More, I added to my woes;
If a calm appear'd to reign,
Guilt awoke the storm again.

Without Jesus,—far from peace,
Wandering through this barren place,
Oft I said with deepest sigh,
Sinner, thou art doom'd to die.

Precious Saviour! heavenly Friend!
All my wanderings Thou didst end;
From thy Cross, Salvation flows,
There I find a sweet repose.

There, by precious blood divine,
Cleans'd from sin, and sealed thine,
Justice did my debt remove,
Cancell'd by Eternal Love.

XXX.—MOURNING OVER SIN AND HATRED OF IT.

"I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long."—Psa. xxxviii. 6.

A LOVER of the world will perhaps say, If the effect of religion be to make me like a mourner bowed down with grief at the funeral of some beloved friend, let me escape it. Life is given us for enjoyment. Our natural appetites were formed to be gratified. Therefore, as the time is short, let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die.

All this might seem reasonable, did we die like the beasts that perish. But, even were this the case, formed as we are with minds capable of improvement, and living as we do under a DIVINE MORAL GOVERNMENT, where cause and effect are made to operate for

our weal or woe, would it not increase our temporal enjoyment to cultivate the virtues of temperance, sobriety, and prudence, with all the charities of domestic and social life? Every day's experience proves the truth of this, from the destructive consequences which result from a life of thoughtless dissipation, and those anti-social crimes which desolate the earth.

The whole framework of society, with its complicated changes, demonstrates a Moral Governor of the world, who has established laws over which the libertine, the spendthrift, and the infidel have no control. Do men throw the reins upon the neck of their lusts? They fall unhappy victims to their excesses. They live not out half their days.—Do they squander away their property in splendour or dissipation? They sink into the depths, either of want or disease.—Do they deny the immortality of the soul, or a day of future retribution? They are emboldened in crime, till, violating the laws of their country, they pay the penalty by dying an ignominious death.

If these things be so, what a friend is true religion to mankind. What unnumbered blessings follow in her train. But what is true religion? It is the religion of Jesus Christ, as revealed to us in the word of his grace. The entrance into this way of life is indeed strait, and the path in which we must walk is narrow; but, though it be commenced with tears and sorrow, the tears of repentance, and sorrow for sin, it will terminate with songs and everlasting joy. The way of the world, on the contrary, allures the heart by its gaities and pleasures, but its end is eternal death! "Blessed," then, "are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."* "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy."† "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."‡ "Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh."§

* Matt. v. 4. † Psa. cxxvi. 5. ‡ Psa. xxx. 5.
§ Luke vi. 21.

"Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep."*

What an evil and bitter thing is sin! How dreadful are the polluting injections of Satan. But here lies the believer's comfort, that the Spirit of Light is greater than the spirit of darkness; that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.† As God is a sin-hating, and a sin-avenging God, so is sin a soul-tormenting, and a soul-destroying evil. We behold its direful effects in our fallen world, under every form of misery. But at the Cross of Christ, the awful character of sin is written in letters of blood! There we learn its dreadful nature, so offensive to a God of Holiness, so rebellious against a God of Justice. Either the Eternal Son of the Most High must suffer in our stead, or a world of sinners must perish everlastingly!

Oh! may a view, a saving view of the Cross of my Emmanuel, melt my whole soul into contrition and love. Crucify, O Lord, thine enemies and mine. Slay them all before thee. Let no Agag, no firstling of the flock, be spared. Fortify my heart against the inroads of Satan. Enable me to keep a constant watch against those inbred corruptions, from which nothing but death will wholly rid me.

Mourning over sin may appear to some, as little better than the cant of the enthusiast. The language of humiliation does not necessarily prove the heart to be humbled. But when the soul, like David's, is truly broken and contrite, it will express its feelings, without regard to the opinions of men; it will pour out its sorrows to God, who heareth and answereth prayer. "I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long," is not the language of the nominal, but of the deeply tried and experienced Christian. It is most important to examine ourselves, for nothing is so easy as self-deception.

When sin is working within us, do we suffer the enemy quietly to carry on his work of destruction,

* Luke vi. 25. † 1 John i. 7.

we fly instantly to the throne of grace for
th to resist him? The efficacy of believing
is truly wonderful. When the soul is troubled;
it is bowed down under the weight of conscious
the prayer of faith, resting on the promises,
leading the merits of Christ, obtains deliver-
and is turned into a song of praise.

The liberated Christian, though released from his
, does not forget his state of bondage, nor does
se to humble himself before his pardoning God.
anguage of his heart is, Lord, thou knowest
ings, thou knowest that I love thee. I long
sanctifying grace. I mourn over my abomina-
I desire the indwelling of thy Spirit. I pant
greater conformity to thy will; an increased
t in the way of thy commandments. I wait
y call to quit this world, and enter into the hea-
rest, where all thy saints enjoy a state of perfect
ss, an eternal separation from all evil, an ever-
enjoyment of thy presence and love.

f these, O my soul, be indeed thy real feelings
esires, fear not the malice of Satan. These
gs after Christ, and holiness, and heaven, if
ıe, are the undoubted marks of thy adoption
ıe family of God, however much they may be
d by an ungodly world.

The voice may be Jacob's voice, when the hands
e hands of Esau. Hypocrites can speak with
noothness, when war is in their hearts. They
eak the language of piety, while indulging in
vice. Surely, then, it is needful to watch and
lest we enter into temptation—lest we deceive
ves.

, thou tempted believer, know for thy comfort,
ins hated and opposed, though they distress,
ot be suffered to destroy thee. Temptations
d, shall not hurt thee, if, like Jesus, thou
repel the Tempter by the sword of the Spirit,
is the word of God. Thy safety lies in resting
ually on the faithfulness of Jesus; in living in

a spirit of watchfulness and prayer. Temptations prove that an enemy is nigh. In a moment, he can attack thee with the battery of hell. Be vigilant; be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might; then shalt thou be able to stand in the evil day, for when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him.

Come, thou blessed Spirit of Grace, with all thy saving power. Descend into my soul, destroy every rebellious inclination, erect the standard of the Cross within me, and when thou hast enabled me to resist the devil, to crucify the flesh, and to renounce the world, then, O then, receive me into the happy region of glory, where all the church triumphant shall sing the conqueror's song.

"As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing,"* is the believer's motto. Godly sorrow and holy joy are blended in his daily experience. He acknowledges his vileness, and esteems Christ precious in his Nature, his Person, his Offices, his Character, and his Work.

Oh! that I may have grace more deeply to enter into the views and feelings of the true believer. Blessed Jesus! speak peace to my conscience, create purity in my heart, destroy the seeds of evil, implant the living principle of faith, and make me wholly to live to thee. Seal salvation to my heart. Give me the inward witness, the Spirit of adoption, the earnest of the future inheritance. Leave me not for one moment, lest I fall; and bind me to thyself by the strong, indissoluble bonds, of redeeming, everlasting love!

How precious is the Grace of God. All blessings flow from this eternal fountain. Lord! pity a poor polluted worm, who now looks to Thee as the God of all grace, mercy, and peace. Take away the heart of stone, my hard, rebellious, heart, which yet, pants after Thee. O, make me sensible of thy infinite mercies, and of those innumerable transgres-

* 2 Cor. vi. 10.

sions which are known only unto Thee. Save me from my *secret* faults, faults to which I may be blind, through the deceitfulness of sin. Give me self-knowledge. Cause me to know the worst of myself, however humbling, however painful, the disclosure may be. I have no hope but in the atonement of Jesus, my only Saviour. May I ever trust in his blood, who is God manifest in the flesh. May I ever be found in him, who is the Lord my Righteousness.

O! heavenly Father, send down the Spirit of thy Son into my heart, that I may be filled with light and love. Save me, blessed Lord! from the captivating influence of earthly things. My foolish heart is ever wandering from Thee, the true, and only centre of felicity. Every thing around me is fugitive, and unsatisfying; yet assuming an importance which it does not possess. My soul is boundless in its desires, being formed for immortality. It seeks after happiness, and what but thine infinite goodness can satisfy the cravings of my never-dying soul? O, in mercy, draw my heart, and fix it in Thyself. Unite all my scattered affections to fear thy name. Let every thought be submissive to thy sway.

Satan is never idle. His suggestions are perpetually presented to the mind in one form or other. If gross sin be hateful, and a temptation to it would drive the believer to fervent prayer, the arch enemy craftily avoids such an awakening temptation. He, therefore, attacks the believer in another way. By a constant succession of trifling, unprofitable, suggestions; by presenting images of earthly things before the eye of the mind; by filling the imagination with a thousand dreams and fancies, he labours quietly, and without alarm, to draw away the heart from God. He thus distracts the mind, dissipates the thoughts, and entangles the affections, till, at length, the grieved Spirit of God withdraws his comfort, and leaves the unwatchful believer in a state of darkness, bordering on despair.

O, blessed Jesus, thou mighty Conqueror of this enemy of my soul, shield me by thy grace; arm me with thy power, and enable me to resist and overcome this dreadful foe. Lord, I am helplessness itself. Undertake for me. I am nothing but guilt and misery, save me, for thy mercy's sake.

XXXI.—THE BURDEN OF SIN DEPLORED.

"We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened."—2 Cor. v. 4.

The worldly-minded professor and the formalist, are alike insensible to the evil of sin. With their lips, indeed, they can say, "We do earnestly repent, and are heartily sorry for these our misdoings. The remembrance of them is grievous unto us, the burden of them is intolerable," while they neither feel sorrow for sin, nor groan under the weight of it. From the table of the Lord, the one can pursue his pleasures, and the other his covetous desires. The one clothes his vices with specious names; the other covers the evil of his heart with a punctilious observance of outward duties. Both stand on the same level in the sight of God, though each despises the other. The formalist considers the worldling as profane; the worldling views the formalist as hypocritical. Pride reigns in both. The love of God dwells in neither.

If we calmly survey what passes around us, we cannot but be pained, if taught of God, to see what trouble people take to impose upon themselves. Every one has some excuse to make for what he does. If you speak to a man of the world, he will soon tell you, that it will not do to be singular; that we must conform to the maxims, customs, and fashions of the world, if we would avoid the odious name of saint.

If you converse with the formalist, he will

extol, as of the first importance, the rites and ceremonies of his Church, while he sneers at experimental religion, the religion of the heart, as being enthusiastic, and carrying things too far. Even amongst real Christians, those, whose hearts have been converted to God, but differing from each other on some points of church discipline and government, we too often see a lamentable want of that charity, which is the bond of perfectness. This is truly a mournful sight! Oh! that the enemies of the Gospel could say of us, as the persecutors of the Church once did, "See how these Christians love one another."

Few, alas! in this evil day, when divisions distract the Church of Christ, are able, in a spirit of brotherly love, and Christian fellowship, to unite with St. Paul in his Catholic prayer: "Grace be with *all them* that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."* The extreme of all parties seize upon the keys in a spirit of Popedom, and open or close the door of admission into the Church, as they think proper. There is a Pope in every heart. How many are unchristianised, whom Christ will own when he makes up his jewels. Oh! what an unspeakable blessing it is to know, and to feel assured, upon the inspired truth of God, that Christ alone holds the keys of Sovereign Authority and Power. "All power," said he, "is given unto me in heaven and in earth."† "I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."‡ "These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and *no man shutteth;* and shutteth, and *no man openeth.*"§

It may be replied: Did not our Lord say to Peter—"I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt

* Eph. vi. 24. † Matt. xxviii. 18. ‡ Rev. i. 17, 18.
§ Rev. iii. 7.

loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven."* He did, and Peter was peculiarly honoured in being the first to open the door into the Christian Church, both to Jews and Gentiles. On the day of Pentecost, through his preaching, three thousand souls were added to the Church, from among the assembled Jews at Jerusalem. And, in the house of Cornelius, the Holy Ghost was imparted, and repentance unto life was granted, to the Gentile company, who also heard from the lips of Peter the words of eternal life.

Peter, in common with the other Apostles, was inspired to declare the will of God, which should be *binding* on the Church in every age. To him, as well as to the rest of the Apostles, was given power to exercise a salutary discipline in the Church, and to separate from it, heinous offenders. This being done, *according to the revealed Will of God*, would be ratified in heaven.†

St. Paul, "called to be an Apostle,"‡ though, as he expresses it, "as one born out of due time,"§ had an equal commission with the twelve. He used this apostolic authority in the Church of Corinth, by cutting off, for a time, an offending member.‖ Also in the Church of Thessalonica.** The same discipline he exercised over Hymeneus and Alexander.††

The power thus delegated by our Lord, as Head of his Church, was not for destruction, but for edification. Peter, therefore, writes, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for *filthy lucre*, but of a ready mind; neither as being *lords* over God's heritage, but being *ensamples* to the flock."‡‡ So also writes St. Paul: "To spare you, I came not as yet unto Corinth. Not that we *have dominion over your faith*, but are helpers of your joy."§§ "Though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for

* Matt. xvi. 19. † See Matt. xviii. 15—20. ‡ Rom. i. 1.
§ 1 Cor. xv. 8. ‖ 1 Cor. v. 4, 5. ** 2 Thess. iii. 14, 15.
†† 1 Tim. i. 19, 20. ‡‡ 1 Pet. v. 2, 3. §§ 2 Cor. i. 23, 24.

edification, and not for your *destruction*, I should not be ashamed."*

These passages clearly show how the Apostles used the keys of authority in the Church, and expose the arrogant pretensions of the Church of Rome, as if she were the sole proprietress of the keys, the mother and mistress of all churches, and the Pope, the successor of Peter, and the Sovereign Pontiff, to open and shut the kingdom of heaven as he pleases. Instead of employing ecclesiastical authority for the *edification of the Church*, the Papal Hierarchy employ it for the sole purpose of establishing their own power, of filling their own coffers, and of persecuting even unto death (when able so to do) the saints of the Most High, who dare not conform to their idolatrous rites, nor receive their antichristian dogmas.

Instead of teaching her sinful members to look unto Jesus for pardon and peace, and to trust only in the merits of his blood for acceptance with God, who fulfilled all the righteousness of the law for us; she sends them to the Priest, who, at the confessional, puts himself in the place of God, and then absolves them in the plenitude of his power. They return pacified in their consciences, by this priestly quietus, regardless of the One Atonement which Christ made for sin.—Instead of directing her members to the great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, who ever liveth to make intercession for us, and whose intercession *alone* can prevail with God; this Apostate Church sends her blinded votaries to the Virgin Mary, as "the Mother of divine grace," "the Queen of all saints," thus lowering the majesty and glory of the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. And, as if this did not sufficiently eclipse the Sun of Righteousness, she multiplies her intercessors, and fills her sanctuaries with the images of her idol saints!

Happy would it be, if many in the Protestant Church did not tread so near the multiplied errors of

* 2 Cor. x. 8.

the Church of Rome. We are ever prone to extremes. There is a danger of undervaluing the blessed instituted sacraments of our Lord; and there is also a danger of unduly exalting them, beyond the design for which they were appointed. The only fountain of grace is God in Christ. All grace flows down to us from the ever adorable Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Neither creatures nor sacraments have any inherent virtue in themselves to confer grace. They are not the fountain, but channels or golden pipes, through which the golden oil of grace is conveyed to the believing soul, through the power of the Holy Ghost.* Without faith in the heart of the recipient the Holy Communion of the body and blood of Christ, will be but an empty channel, through which no living water will pass to the soul.

Oh! what a blessing it is to be a BIBLE CHRISTIAN, to bear the Image of Christ, to be a temple of the Holy Ghost. Without this, no forms of religion, however excellent, no Church, however pure, to which we may have nominally belonged, can help us when Christ cometh to judgment. We may then say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? .....and in thy name done many wonderful works?" but the Great Searcher of hearts will answer,—"I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."† We may now loftily exclaim, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we, but, at the righteous revelation of God, we shall be found to be no better than heathen temples, in which the idols of self-righteousness, pride, and persecuting zeal have had the homage of our hearts.

Oh! my soul, in the midst of abounding iniquity, in the midst of errors and heresies, keep near to thy Almighty Saviour. I groan, being burdened with a body of sin and death. How long shall vain thoughts lodge within me? Oh! that they may be for ever removed. I trust I can say—"I hate vain thoughts," and yet, alas! how they swarm, at times,

* Zech. iv. 12. † Matt. vii. 22, 23.

like locusts, darkening the air, and devouring every green herb of the field. It was said by the Prophet, "O, Jerusalem! wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be?"* Lord, make me clean, even *now*. Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me. Holiness is happiness. I want to feel every evil motion subdued, every thing contrary to the will of God entirely done away. I know that there is no arriving at *sinless perfection* in this life. But, perfection is the Christian's aim. It was Paul's desire for his converts: "This also we wish, even your perfection."† An absolute freedom from all sin, in mind, affection, will, and conduct, forms one of the glories of heaven, where, in the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, will be gathered, the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and the spirits of just men *made perfect*. There they shall be arrayed in linen, white and clean, which is the righteousness of saints. Their sanctification will then be complete when they see Jesus, and are made like him in the perfection of holiness.

Is there a point at which the Christian may stop? No, there is not. While running the heavenly race, we must forget the things which are behind, and reach forth unto those things which are before, and thus press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. "As many as be perfect," all who have attained to a *ripeness* in Christian graces, and who have come to "*full age*" in Christian experience, will be thus minded.‡

The two great commandments are, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."§ Where is the soul in this corrupted world, who, before conversion, truly loved the Lord? The question will be intuitively answered, "It cannot be

* Jer. xiii. 27. † 2 Cor. xiii. 9. ‡ Phil. iii. 15.
§ Matt. xxii. 37, 39; Mark xii. 30, 31.

found." And where is the soul who, *after* conversion, has never had occasion *for one moment* to mourn over cold affections, or wandering desires after earthly things? Where is the man who can boldly affirm,—I have never, since the hour of my conversion, in any one instance, sinned against God. He who can say so is lamentably ignorant of himself.

Oh! that I may have grace to humble myself in the presence of Him who looketh at the heart. I have no ground for self-complacency, no reason for self-exultation. I have daily cause for mourning when I review my own heart, that vile, deceitful, hateful thing. And yet, I have daily cause to rejoice in the Lord, whose faithfulness and truth, whose forbearance and long-suffering, whose pity and love, are like himself, infinite, unbounded, unsearchable.

Oh! that I had a vigorous, lively, active, faith. This, like the strong west wind in Egypt, which drove the locusts into the Red Sea, would drive away the hated evils from my heart. Guilty fears, painful apprehensions, dire forebodings, misgiving thoughts, anxious cares, tumultuous imaginations, with all the swarms of worldly lusts, carnal desires, and whatever else is formed and fostered in my wretched heart, would then be all destroyed like Pharoah's army, through the almighty power of Jesus.

Be thou glorified, O Lord, in my complete deliverance from the bondage of corruption and the dominion of sin. Fill me with spiritual light. Bring me into the glorious liberty of the Gospel, and at last conduct me safely through the Jordan of death into the celestial Canaan. Whilst a sojourner in the wilderness, guide me by the pillar of fire; screen me with the overshadowing cloud; feed me with the heavenly manna; refresh me with the waters from the smitten rock. Give me a holy courage in thy cause, a holy confidence in thy mercy, a holy consolation in thy exceeding great and precious promises. Strengthen me to fight manfully under the banners

of the Cross, to face my enemies without fear, knowing that He, who is with me, is greater than all they who are against me. As a good soldier of Jesus Christ, may I have grace continually to *advance*, never to *retreat*. In thy divine armoury, thou hast furnished me with the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the sword of the Spirit, but nothing is provided for the *back*. The cowardly Christian, who flies from his foes, is exposed to the fiery darts of Satan, and may fall vanquished on the field of battle. "Go forward," was thy command to Moses, when Israel was enclosed by mountains, the army of Pharoah behind them, and the Red Sea before them. They obeyed thy word, the waters were divided, they passed in safety between the liquid walls, they saw their enemies dead on the sea shore, and sang a song of gladness unto the Lord who had triumphed gloriously, who had made the host of Pharoah to sink as lead in the mighty waters.*

Oh! give me grace to "go forward," to follow the Captain of my salvation, strengthened by his promise, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."†

XXXII.—TRUE WISDOM THE SOURCE OF HAPPINESS.

"Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace..... Happy is every one that retaineth her."—Prov. iii. 17, 18.

EARTHLY things can never satisfy the enlarged desires of an immortal soul. This is the reason why worldly characters are so restless and changeable. Temporal objects soon cloy and satiate, therefore they fly from flower to flower like vagrant butterflies, till death closes their idle chace after an unreal happiness.

* Exod. xiv, xv. † Rev. ii. 10.

Did they possess true wisdom, they would discover the source of true felicity. Christ and happiness are inseparable. If we find true happiness, it is because we have found Christ; for, if we find Christ, we must be happy. The pardon of sin, peace with God, purity of heart, and the hope of glory, cannot fail to render the believer blessed.

The first lesson which we learn in the school of Christ is HUMILITY. "Blessed are the poor in spirit."* Many are eager to dive into the deep things of God, before they have well learned the *first principles* of the gospel of Christ. Hence arises that caution of St. Paul in his Epistle to Timothy, respecting the ordination of men to the ministry:—"Not a novice," (one newly come to the faith) "lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil."† "Lay hands suddenly on no man."‡ There is something dangerously pleasing in exercising our ingenuity, and in disputing about the hidden mysteries of our holy religion. But this unhallowed spirit not unfrequently leads to unscriptural theories, and even to scepticism itself.

Another lesson which we learn in the school of Christ, after the knowledge of our own nothingness, and the all-sufficiency of the Saviour, is the SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD. His counsel shall stand, and He will do all his pleasure. Through his word, the Almighty has communicated his will concerning us. We know no further than he has been pleased to make known his ways unto us; therefore, to argue, and draw inferences, and make deductions, and come to conclusions upon those things, around which infinite wisdom has drawn an *impenetrable veil*, is presumptuous, is sinful. True wisdom is ever accompanied with humility.

The Scriptures plainly declare, that man is a responsible creature, possessing an immortal spirit. He is treated as such by all those arguments, warnings, threatenings, promises, encouragements, and

* Matt. v. 3. † 1 Tim. iii. 6. ‡ 1 Tim. v. 22.

entreaties, which are scattered throughout the sacred volume, to alarm and allure him, to rouse and draw him to the fountain of happiness, to his God and Saviour, from whom he has revolted, to whom he is invited, and through whose sovereign love alone he can be saved.

The Scriptures plainly declare, that man is in a state of spiritual death; utterly helpless, and unable to repent, believe, and obey, through any natural power or willingness of his own; that if left to himself he must inevitably perish, like a man tied hand and foot and thrown into the sea. We are tied and bound with the chain of our sins, and if not saved by another, must be lost for ever.

The Scriptures also declare, that God's foreknowledge is infinite; that he sees the end from the beginning; that nothing can happen without his command or permission. This is proved by prophecies clearly foretold, and minutely accomplished, without *forcing* the human will; the guilt of the accomplishment resting upon the sinner, who acts freely, while the counsels of heaven are wisely and mysteriously fulfilled. "Him," said Peter to the Jews, "being delivered by the *determinate counsel* and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by *wicked hands* have crucified and slain."*

This short view should teach us the impropriety, yea, the impiety, of refusing to admit any truth of Scripture, because it does not exactly square with our preconceived ideas of the Christian system.—Hence arises the necessity of continually reverting to our first lesson, HUMILITY. Like the letters of the alphabet, this sweet grace of the Spirit forms the basis of true heavenly knowledge, from the first rudiments to the highest attainments in the school of Christ; yea, the higher we advance in heavenly wisdom, the lower we shall fall in self-abasement.—"Children, young men, and fathers,"† must all be

* Acts ii. 23.—See Acts iv. 27, 28; Acts i. 16; John xvii. 12; Matt. xxvi. 24.

† 1 John ii. 12, 13.

clothed with humility, but more especially the matured Christian. In heaven, the angels veil their faces with their wings.* In heaven, the saints cast their crowns before the throne.†

Blessed Lord! give me the spirit of a little child. Let me never reject thy counsel, nor rebel against thy sovereignty. Clothe me with humility, fill me with love. Teach me to do thy will. What I cannot comprehend, give me grace to believe. It is enough that Thou hast said it. Enable me daily to repose my soul on thy promises. I know that all good comes from thee; all evil from myself. Thou art the source of true felicity, the fountain of living waters; in the fulness of thy grace thou hast invited me to come, that I may "take the water of life freely."‡ Lord, I come at thy command, and by thy power; O save me for thy mercy's sake.

Without attempting to explain and make clear the deep, yet holy decrees of the Almighty, or to reconcile by human arguments those truths which, however apparently at variance, are in perfect unison with each other, let us rather study the divine word as a *practical book*, showing us what we must believe and do, in order to obtain eternal life. The wisdom of God is not confined within the narrow limits of our contracted conceptions, no more than his creation is contained within the circle of our powers of vision. All the sublime revelations of Jehovah throw a glory around his justice, holiness, and love. All his perfections blend and harmonise at the Cross of Christ. The blessings of redemption are promised by the Father, purchased by the Son, and bestowed through the Holy Ghost. All proceed from the unmerited, sovereign grace of the Triune Jehovah. Sinners lying under the curse of a broken law, and bound by the *chain of a will at enmity with God*, are now redeemed and restored to the image of God, and a child-like obedience to his will.‖

* Isa. vi. 2. † Rev. iv. 10. ‡ Rev. xxii. 17.
‖ Eph. iv. 23, 24; Col. iii. 10.

If our hearts have been humbled, if we have been brought under a consciousness of guilt and misery to the foot of the Cross, if we have been led to renounce our own fancied righteousness, and, if we have been enabled to lay hold upon Christ as our Saviour, as our Advocate with the Father, as our only hope of glory; and if, in consequence of this apprehension of Christ by faith, we feel our hearts drawn to him in love, choosing him as our portion, and walking in him as our way, in opposition to all worldly portions and ways, not fearing his reproach, but glorying in the Cross:—then we have discovered the source of true happiness, then we possess that inward witness of which St. John speaks;* that testimony of the conscience, and that witnessing of the Spirit with our spirit, of which St. Paul speaks;† and that manifestation of Christ to our hearts, of which He himself speaks to his disciples.‡ Then we may look *back* to our election in Christ,§ and *forwards* to our being with him in glory.‖ Where is boasting? It is excluded. Where is license to sin? It is for ever banished from this *holy* ground, where proud reason must put off her shoes from off her feet.**

Here nothing can stand, but what is humble. Here none can walk, but the redeemed of the Lord. Holiness and humility flow from the electing love of God, not from the natural working of the heart. God alone shall be exalted, who alone is to be adored. Woe is to that rebellious worm who shall dare to tear the laurels from the Saviour's brow, and place them on his own. Man fell through pride. He is saved through humility, for

"Christ will sooner abdicate his own,
Than stoop from heaven to give the proud a throne."

O! gracious Saviour, may I ever look to thee in a spirit of humility, follow thee in a spirit of

* 1 John v. 10. † Rom. viii. 16. ‡ John xiv. 21.
§ Eph. i. 3, 4. ‖ John xvii. 24. ** Exod. iii. 5.

humility, and seek to glorify thee by a spirit of humility. Preserve me from the pride of reason, and the pride of works. Empty me of self, and replenish me out of the fulness of thy love. Direct me aright through the mazes of this erring world. Suffer me not to lose, through supineness or unbelief, the pleasures of heavenly wisdom. Shine upon my soul, and increase my trust in thee, while passing through this contentious, sinful region, to thy abode of glory.

What can more conduce to the happiness of the soul than to know that we are the Lord's. This knowledge, blessed be God, is not unattainable; it is a knowledge essential to our peace. Some may call it presumptuous, but so did not St. John, or he would not have said, "These things have I written unto you that *believe* on the name of the Son of God; that that ye may *know* that ye *have* eternal life, and that ye *may believe* on the name of the Son of God."* Again he wrote: "Hereby we *know* that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us."† Oh! happy experience.

The Spirit's witness does not consist in mere rapturous feelings, ecstacies, and impulses, which are often the offspring of a heated imagination, strong passions, and enthusiastic emotions; but it consists in those filial dispositions of love, and fear, and reverence, which are accompanied with joy and peace in believing, and cause the happy believer to abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.‡ O! that this may be my blessed experience! St. Paul, who enjoyed this precious witness, declares, that "experience worketh hope;.....because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us."§ We cannot, therefore, have a well-grounded hope of glory, through the righteousness of Christ, if we have not the inward experience of the love of God in our souls, which is the Spirit of adoption, enabling us to cry, "Abba Father," and

* 1 John v. 13. † 1 John iii. 24. ‡ Rom. xv. 13.
§ Rom. v. 4, 5.

to draw near unto God in Christ, as the Father of mercies, yea, as *our* Father, and the God of all consolation. In this way, the Spirit witnesseth with our spirits that we are the children of God, by filling us with love to God, and transforming us into the image of God; that, being made his children by adoption and grace, we may bear a resemblance to our heavenly Father in righteousness and true holiness.

The religion of Jesus is a religion of love, from its promulgation to its consummation. God is love. The fruit of the Spirit is love. The work of Christ is love. Oh! that I may live under the constraining influence of love,

> "This is the grace which lives and sings,
> When faith and hope shall cease,
> 'T is this shall strike our joyful strings,
> In the sweet realms of bliss."

The more we possess of this grace, the more we shall resemble God the Father, Son, and Spirit; the more we shall enjoy of heaven in our own souls; the more we shall create a little heaven around us; and the more we shall be fitted for that pure world, where love reigns eternal in every redeemed, in every angel's breast.

Oh! happy state! the work of sovereign grace. Compared with this blessedness, how beclouded are the prospects, how unsatisfying the pleasures and pursuits of a fallen world. True wisdom is the only source of true felicity.

To cultivate these views and feelings, these principles and affections, is far better than to spend our time in vain researches after those things which the human mind can never fathom; or to spend our breath in disputations which can yield no profit.

A pious and humble search after truth, a holy contemplation and discourse upon the sublimities of Christian doctrine; a reverential meditation on the deep things of God, into which even angels desire to look, is not forbidden. But a disputatious spirit,

a love of controversy, a war of words, a desire of victory, a pertinacity in maintaining our own opinions, a readiness to unchristianise those who differ from us, betrays an unhumbled, an unsanctified heart. Such a spirit engenders strife, sows discord, divides the church of Christ, fosters vain-glory, and, like a nipping frost, checks the growth of the heavenly plant, and destroys those brotherly affections which characterise the children of God.

To contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, is a Christian duty,* but we must contend in a spirit of love. The revelation of the divine will was not made to promote our natural love of curiosity, but to show us our state and our duty, and to bring us, through the operation of the Spirit, to a child-like conformity to this revealed will. Our blessed Lord evidently proves this, when he says:—"I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight."† The worldly-wise are suffered to remain in the darkness of their boasted wisdom, while humble, docile minds are enlightened from above. "The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way."‡ "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."§

Under the darkest cloud, and in the deepest waters, may these gracious promises support and comfort me:—"Fear thou not; for I am with thee."‖ "When thou passest through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee."** "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."†† "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."‡‡ "Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth,

* Jude 3. † Matt. xi. 25, 26. ‡ Psa. xxv. 9.
§ John vii. 17. ‖ Isa. xli. 10; xliii. 5. ** Isa. xliii. 2.
†† Heb. xiii. 5. ‡‡ Rom. viii. 28.

nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."* "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth."† "What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter."‡

Blessed Lord, be pleased to impart the spirit of wisdom and revelation, that I may know Thee as my covenant God and Father, and Jesus Christ as my friend and Saviour; that I may receive the truth in love, not daring to dive into thy decrees, those secret things which thou hast wisely concealed from man. Teach me what I ought to do; show me the path of life, and enable me to walk therein. Give me an increase of faith and love, of peace and joy, till my soul, made happy in thy love, shall take its flight beyond the shadows of this world, to where the glories of redemption will be unfolded to the Church triumphant, amidst songs of never-ending praise.

Would you be happy here below?
Let not your heart on earth remain;
Can fleeting pleasures, mixed with woe,
A solid happiness contain?

Would you be happy here below?
Beware of pleasure's gilded snare,
Its painted vanities forego,
Which end in tears and dark despair.

Would you be happy here below?
Seek not the wealth which worldlings prize,
A nobler treasure seek to know,
Eternal in the blissful skies.

Would you be happy here below?
Avoid *false* honour's empty name—§
A glare, a momentary show,
Which leads to everlasting shame.‖

* Rom. viii. 38. † Psa. xlvi. 10. ‡ John xiii. 7.
§ John v. 44. ‖ Dan. xii. 2.

Would you be happy here below?
To heaven direct your warm desire,
There, let your constant footsteps go;
There, let your wishes all aspire.

Would you be happy here below?
O! love the Saviour—Prince of Peace;
Then anguish you shall never know,
Your *joy in Him* will never cease.

THE PRECIOUSNESS OF CHRIST.

"Unto you which believe, he is precious."—1 Pet. ii. 7.

St. Peter, inspired by the Holy Ghost, has taught us what is truly precious.

"Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, ...but with the *precious blood* of Christ."*

"To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and *precious*."†

"Unto you therefore which believe, he is *precious*."‡

O! that Christ may ever be precious to my soul in all his offices, characters, and relations, which he bears in the covenant of grace to his believing people. Faith, which receives Christ into the heart, is also a precious gift of God. Thus writes the Apostle:—

"Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like *precious faith* with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."§

"Ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much

* 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. † 1 Pet. ii. 4. ‡ 1 Pet. ii. 7.
§ 2 Pet. i. 1.

more *precious than of gold* that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ."*

"……His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and *precious promises;* that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."†

The experience of God's children is the same in every age. David, in the overflowings of his love, sang:—"How precious (marginal reading) is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings."‡

"How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!"§

If we have tasted that the Lord is gracious, we shall daily feel him to be precious. His righteousness is our garment of salvation. His Truth our shield and buckler. All this blessedness we freely enjoy, without money and without price. O what can be more transporting than the assurance that Christ is mine, and I am his. What should we be without Christ? Miserable and undone! To make us value the Saviour, the Spirit makes us feel our ruined state. He shows us our wretchedness, and causes us to feel it, that we may long for deliverance. Were we not sinners there would be no need of a Saviour, for the whole need not a Physician, but they that are sick. Jesus came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. He came to seek and to save that which is lost. Hence we find, that to feel our malady, to feel our need of Jesus, is requisite to our believing application of Him, and our believing dependence upon Him. "Unto you therefore which *believe*, he is *precious*."

* 1 Pet. i. 6, 7. † 2 Pet. i. 3, 4. ‡ Psa. xxxvi. 7.
§ Psa. cxxxix. 17.

Some persons are apt to think that something must be done, in order to render them *meet to receive grace;* that something like a price must be brought in their hand. This is the leaven of Popery, the leaven of self-righteousness. This is the barrier which prevents many from coming to Christ. O! the deep-rooted legality of our fallen nature! They cannot conceive that Jesus will receive the *vilest* who *come unto him.* Hence they try to remove their leopard spots, their Ethiopian blackness, by outward reformation, while the corruption lies deep within. Wearied with the vain attempt to keep the innate evil from ripening into outward acts of wickedness, they are led through grace, to throw themselves in self-despair at the feet of Jesus, crying—"God be merciful to me a sinner."* "Lord save me, or I perish."† And are they repulsed? Oh! no! The loving heart of the Saviour receives them; the loving arms of the Saviour embrace them, as the father did the returning prodigal; they obtain a full forgiveness, through faith in his blood; they are clothed with the robe of his righteousness; they receive the ring of reconciliation; a feast of fat things is provided for them; and they are filled with peace, and purity, and joy.

Thus, while nature is always moving in a circle, and never reaching the centre of happiness, grace, by a *direct line*, leads the sinner at once to Christ. "As many are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."‡ The Spirit always leads the sinner to the Cross, where we are admitted into the family of God; for, says St. Paul, "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."§

How invaluable is a childlike spirit; to feel our will acquiescing in the will of God. This spiritual feeling is the work of the Holy Ghost, whose office it is to guide us into all truth. No power of reason, no stretch of intellect, no determination of the will, left to its natural action, can raise us above the effects

* Luke xviii. 13. † Matt. viii. 25. ‡ Rom. viii. 14.
§ Gal. iii. 26.

of the Fall. As water, by its own power cannot rise above its own level, no more can we.

To receive Christ into the heart by faith is the sole operation of the Spirit; for St. John declares,—that "as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God"* Christ is the author and source of all blessedness. Where can rest be found but in Him whose precious name is Emmanuel, God with us? None who trust in him shall ever be confounded. To suppose such a thing, would be to contradict his own word. It is the natural unbelief of our hearts which keeps us away from Christ, and consequently from holiness and happiness. Did all the world *truly believe*, all the world would assuredly be saved; for the command of Christ to his disciples was, "Go ye into *all the world*, and preach the gospel to *every creature*. He that believeth, and is baptized, *shall be saved*."† If *all* had believed the word of his grace, *all would have been saved*, to whom the Apostles declared the unsearchable riches of Christ.

There are many shades in the moral character of mankind, some lighter, some darker, but all, without exception, are naturally *unbelievers in heart*, and whilst remaining in this awful state, they exclude themselves from those blessings which a merciful God hath provided for us through the gift of his Son. How precious is faith, and because precious, how rare a thing it is! The boasted virtues of worldly morality are as common as the pebbles in the brook; while the graces of the Spirit, like precious stones, are only here and there to be seen.

O! that my heart were overflowing with love to Jesus, and ardently longing for his salvation. He is precious to them that believe. Do I esteem Christ as the pearl of great price? Am I willing to part with all that the world and the flesh hold dear, to

* John i. 12, 13. † Mark xvi. 15, 16.

obtain this inestimable treasure? Lord impart Thyself to me. Dwell in my heart, as in a temple consecrated to thy glory. May the fire of holy love ever burn on the altar of my heart, and never go out.

What daily need we have to watch against spiritual lukewarmness. This evil state of heart will creep insensibly upon us without much watchfulness and prayer. A daily humbling sense of our sinfulness, a daily feeling of our need of Jesus, a constant looking unto him, and a believing application of his precious blood and righteousness, can alone keep us in a lively, dependent, loving, obedient frame of mind. O that we may be in *earnest* about salvation, then will our peace flow as a river. The God whom we serve is a God of love. How marvellously has he manifested forth the glory of his grace in the redemption of the world. But, alas! we have heard so long, and so often, about the dying love of Jesus, that it ceases to affect our hearts with that intensity which those feel who are *first* awakened to a sense of their danger and deliverance. Should it be thus with us? Is not this leaving our first love? Must it not be grievous to an infinitely loving, and precious Saviour? Oh! that I may hourly mourn over this lamented, this hated coldness, at the foot of the Cross, till I become like the burning seraphim, a flame of love.

What a wonderful provision has a God of mercy made for our present and future happiness. He wills our good. We, strange to say, seem to will our own misery, for thus said our Lord, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."* O! how much we forsake our own mercies, when we forsake the Fountain of living waters, and hew out to ourselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

The reason why people in general are so averse to true religion, must be from their wrong apprehensions of it. They look upon it as a system of restraints, a withholding from them the loved enjoy-

* John v. 40.

ments of the world. But, what can be so consonant with right reason, as to devote ourselves to the service of that God from whom we receive our being, and every other good thing connected with our existence? It is in Him we live, and move, and have our being; and it is to Him we are indebted for all our comforts as travelling pilgrims. But, how immensely is our obligation to live to his glory increased, when we consider, that we are not our own, being bought with a price, and that price no less than the precious blood of his own dear Son. Nothing but the blinding, hardening, deceiving nature of sin, and the influence of Satan on our minds and hearts, can keep us from this most reasonable devotedness of ourselves to God. Herein lies our guilt. From hence, arises our misery.

O that I may now be like my Saviour in holiness; live near to him in daily fellowship; and when released from the body, dwell for ever with him in glory.

XXXIV.—THE LIFE OF FAITH.

"The just shall live by his faith."—Hab. ii. 4.

The life of the redeemed through Christ Jesus is a life of faith.—Being united to the glorified Head of the mystical body, the Church, believers receive all their spiritual life, all their vital influence from above. Christ is the way, the truth, and *the life.** All his people live by and through Him. He is their hiding-place, their refuge from every danger; their life is hid with Christ in God; because he lives, they shall live also. Thousands call themselves Christians, who know nothing of the life of faith. They are zealous for *their Church*, but it is a party zeal.—Some floating images of the truth pass through their minds,

* John xiv. 6.

but no abiding principles of the Gospel influence or sanctify their hearts. There is a wide difference between speculative and experimental religion. The one, is the religion of the head, the other, the religion of the heart. If the mind be merely enlightened, the soul resembles a star-light night in winter —clear, but cold. When the heart is brought under the influence of the Sun of Righteousness, the soul, abounding in the fruits of the Spirit, presents the lovely appearance of summer;—all is warmth and beauty.

The merit of works is the doctrine of the Church of Rome. The doctrine of justification by faith only, without the deeds of the law, is the peculiar characteristic of the gospel, and forms a touchstone whereby to judge of the soundness or unsoundness of Protestant churches.

The doctrine of justification by faith through the righteousness of Christ, as it brings the highest glory to God, so it secures the best interests of holiness in the heart of the believer. The fact is, at once, both true and striking, that the very individuals who renounce their own works in the article of their justification before God, and therefore are charged with encouraging licentiousness, are the very individuals who, from their anxiety to maintain good works as the fruits of faith and evidences of their justification, are stigmatised as methodistical, and being righteous over-much, by the self-righteous boasters of good works. But the tree is known by its fruits.

God is infinitely just, therefore he demands an infinite satisfaction from his rebellious creatures. His law is holy, and demands a sinless obedience to all its requirements. What we esteem a *small breach* of the commandments, is punishable with eternal death:—"Cursed is every one that continueth not *in all things* which are written in the book of the law to do them."*

* Gal. iii. 10.

Can a finite creature give an infinite satisfaction?

Can a being conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity, with a heart deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, keep the law of God whole and undefiled?

It is impossible. The attempt is vain. Let a person try for one day to keep the entire law of God, reaching as it does to the thoughts, purposes, desires, and affections of the heart, without the least possible deviation from its demands, and he will, in *one hour* be led to cry out, if sincere, "God me merciful to me a sinner."

Man has devised many ways to escape the way of God's appointment; but after all his labours, he remains a guilty sinner still. Penances cannot remove guilt, neither can the purgatorial fire, that unscriptural ordeal of the Romish church, purge it away. Superstition may use its whips and scourges, its rough-haired garments and frequent fastings, to mortify the body and propitiate heaven, but all in vain —the old Adam gathers strength by the very means employed to subdue the inbred evil. All prove, at last, to be no better than a spider's web, a refuge of lies.

O blessed Redeemer, preserve me from the fatal leaven of self-righteousness; from the wily crafts of Satan. Lead me to a saving knowledge of myself. Teach me the good and the right way to the mercy-seat. Thou art the way. O! may I daily walk with thee by faith; holding sweet communion with thee, and deriving all my strength from thy fulness.

Whilst renouncing every work which would dare to join itself with thee, in my acceptance with the Father, may I be ever zealous of good works, thus proving myself to be amongst that little flock to whom it is the Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom. Save me from Romish errors, from every antichristian doctrine which would raise man and depress thee. Oh! make me faithful in maintaining

the truth, and fearless in boldly confessing thee before men.

Almighty God, in his infinite wisdom, has devised a plan which his love and power have executed, and which, through his grace, he has revealed to us in the gospel of his Son. By an act of inconceivable mercy, he has made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Jesus being made under the law, became our righteousness, by fulfilling in our nature all its requirements, and by suffering in our stead all its penalties. The moment, therefore, that we truly believe, and receive him into our hearts by faith, we are justified from all things, from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses.* All that the law can do, is to convince and to condemn. It is the gospel alone which enlightens and saves the soul.

Precious faith, the inestimable gift of God, is what we need.—This grace, by uniting us to Christ, puts us in possession of all his merits, makes us interested in his salvation, and opens a *direct way* of access to God, who views us, *in his Son*, as his adopted children. O! what a blessed revelation of mercy and grace! No wonder, if Satan strive to hide it from our view. Happy are they who, tasting the sweetness of this redemption, can sing with David:—"This God is *our* God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death."†

As justification by faith only strikes at the root of human pride, it is no marvel if the proud sinner, as well as Satan, rise against it. It requires no small degree of humility to renounce all creature dependence, all our fancied excellence, and to trust solely in the finished work of Jesus for acceptance with God. This blessed state of heart is the work of the Holy Spirit. He can so take of the things of Christ, and show them unto us; he can so guide us into all truth, as to make us delight in every thing which we *naturally dislike*; viz. an entire renunciation of our own

* Acts xiii. 39. † Psa. xlviii. 14.

supposed goodness, and an entire reception of Christ and his righteousness.

When this glorious work is wrought in our souls, then we become the very members of Christ's mystical body; we pass from death unto life, we are made the heirs of eternal glory. O! transporting privilege! the heirs of perdition to be made heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ! Truly this is the rest, and this is the refreshing. How delightful are the words of Paul: "We which have believed *do* enter into rest."* Yes! even now, in this tumultuous world, we enter into rest. We rest in the love of God; we rest on the bosom of our Redeemer; we rest in the promises of his grace, and thus coming to him, and relying upon him, we find rest unto our souls. Christ is the only resting-place for the weary soul. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked,"† but, "in me," saith Christ to his people, "ye shall have peace."‡

The carnal heart naturally hates this revelation of grace, and the character which it produces. Religion in its *present form* is so uncongenial to the natural man, that it requires not the aid of moroseness or austerity to render it unpalatable. Though it come to him clothed with humility, with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, and smiling with benignity and love, yet he turns with aversion from this lovely object. Thus it was when He, who was the chief among ten thousand, the altogether lovely, came unto his own; his own received him not; they saw no beauty in him, nothing that they should desire him.

If the natural heart dislikes the religion of Jesus, how careful should real Christians be, lest by a want of the due exhibition of Christian graces, they should prejudice the ungodly against Christianity itself. True religion is lovely in its native character. We disfigure it too often by unchristian tempers, and thus impede its influence in the circle in which we move. Temper, like an impure dross, sullies the

* Heb. iv. 3. † Isa. lvii. 21. ‡ John xvi. 33.

crystal cup of domestic comfort. What contradictions we often hear,—"He is an *excellent* Christian, and would be quite a *pattern*, if it were not for his temper, which often carries him beyond the *bounds of moderation!*" Nothing is more common than such an observation amongst professors of religion! He is a good man—but..... This *but* spoils all.

Oh! did we live a life of faith in the Son of God, we should live in the daily cultivation of heavenly tempers. Our study and aim would be to tread in the steps of the meek and lowly Saviour; to drink deep into his spirit; and by a conversation becoming godliness, to show forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light. Knowing from whence these blessings flow we should "wait on the Lord."* How expressive is the Hebrew word for wait. "It implies the extension of a right line from one point to another. The first point is the human heart, the line is its intense desire, and the last point is God, to whom the heart extends this straight line of earnest desire. He who, while he waits on God, keeps his way, is sure to have the further blessings of which he is in pursuit." O! that my wandering heart may thus be led to proceed in one unbroken line of holy, heavenly desires, towards my God and Saviour.

Blessed Jesus! the work must be thine. Thou, thou alone canst bind my fugitive affections to Thyself. Thou, who are the Life, O quicken me to live a life of faith in thee. Perform thy work of love in me, and then, through all eternity, my work of praise will never cease.

How precious is a life of faith,
In Jesus' never-failing word;
To credit all the Saviour saith,
To trust the promise of the Lord.

It gives a calm, a sweet repose,
Which gilds the varying scenes of life;

* Psa. xxvii. 14; xxxvii. 34; Prov. xx. 22.

A peace, the true believer knows,
While passing through this world of strife.

His mind is kept in perfect peace,
When stayed upon his faithful God;
While terrors on the sinner seize,
Beneath Jehovah's vengeful rod.

When judgments, like the thunders roll,
And nations quake through guilt and fear;
When earth is shook from pole to pole,
Believers feel their Saviour near.

They walk with Jesus, and are bless'd;
They walk in love, and can rejoice;
They walk to their celestial rest,
Their souls' delightful, happy choice.

Along this consecrated way,
Which all the saints of old have trod,
I hasten to th' eternal day,
To thee, my Saviour, and my God.

XXXV.—SEEKING AFTER GOD.

"God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee."—Psa. lxiii. 1.

E real value of a thing is not to be estimated by eagerness with which it is sought. If this were to ur rule of judging, we should be sadly deceived. To amass wealth, men rise early, and late take . To obtain this object of their desire, they igate oceans, traverse deserts, endure privations, often risk life itself.

To gain worldly glory, the warrior braves the non's mouth, combats in the blood-stained field, tches the laurel-wreath from the very hand of th, and expires amidst the shouts of victory.

To immortalise his name, the man of science tes the midnight oil, and wastes still more the oil

of life. Health droops beneath the mental toil; he lights the torch of fame, and dies!

To tread the flowery paths of pleasure, multitudes devote their days. Each thought, each hour, is drawn into the circle of dissipation. Like summer-flies, they bask in the sun-beam of delight; and like these insects of a day, they quickly disappear, unregretted by the world.

In this anxious search for riches, glory, fame, and pleasure, so all-absorbing, so incessant, God is forgotten. That Being, who is the First Great Cause of all, man seeks not. How powerful are the calls of Infinite Love: "Seek ye my face."* "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found."† "Seek ye me, and ye shall live."‡ But the gracious sound falls unheeded on the ear.

Oh! Heavenly Father, give me grace to seek thee with my whole soul, to seek thee with the best affections of my heart, the best powers and faculties of my mind. May all my talents, my time, my tongue, my worldly substance, be employed in thy service; for only of *thine own* can I render unto Thee. To Thee be all the praise, thou source and giver of every good.

As the wild uncultivated Indian barters the precious metals of his country for worthless beads and trinkets, so, many Christians, though baptised in the name of Christ, barter their precious souls for the empty baubles of the world. Did we know God through the teaching of his Spirit; did we know the value of our own souls, oh! how differently we should act. Then would our language be that of the Psalmist, proceeding from the fulness of our hearts, "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee."

Truly delightful is the contemplation of the love of God in Christ. Here all is light and life. Multitudes are enveloped in darkness, because they hate the light of truth. But, when the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts, when the light of life

* Psa. xxvii. 8. † Isa. lv. 6. ‡ Amos v. 4.

pon their souls, when Jesus reveals himself
in all the fulness of his salvation: then the
unbelief fly before the beams of Truth, and
ls are filled with peace and joy.
od is love."* Precious revelation of his
Calculated to call forth every expression of
ness, and to awaken every grateful feeling.
t my cold heart could resemble the seraphims
ho, burning with sacred fire, surround the
f Jehovah. As God is love, so all his pur-
wards his people are love. He wills their
s. His tender mercies are over all his works.
is love, forbidding nothing, but what, if
in, would harm us; and commanding
but what, if obeyed, will make us happy.
eful, then, is rebellion against infinite love!
tly deserving everlasting punishment.
God's afflictive dispensations are the fruit of
. They are correctives, for the spiritual
his children. The Gospel of Christ affords
imest exhibition of divine love. All our
are lost in this infinity of grace. O! that
ave these quickening views of the boundless
God more vividly impressed on my soul.
y humble penitent, the Scriptures breathe
but peace. It is to the hardened infidel, and
roud Pharisee, that they speak in language
y. And yet, even to such characters, expos-
are made and pardon offered, if they will
n to the strong-hold, as prisoners of hope.
our misery springs from ourselves. Oh!
porting it is, under a conscious feeling of
rruption, to know, that God desireth not
of a sinner; that he is waiting to be graci-
t he can, and will, subdue our iniquities, if,
grace, we apply to him for the balm in
f we go to him as the Physician there.
elief, interwoven with pride, the love of the
nd the lust of the flesh, forms the barrier

* 1 John iv. 16.

between our souls and God. What need, then, there is for humiliation and self-loathing before the slighted Majesty of heaven! Humility, love, and purity, were the holy features of the Redeemer's character while on earth; and if we ardently seek after his blessed image, we shall, even here, be like him in the beauties of holiness.

How gracious is the promise: "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye search for me with all your heart."* What words can more clearly express the entire *affection of the heart*. A divided heart will never obtain the blessing; we must seek with *all* our heart, if we would find God.

There is something peculiarly forcible in the monosyllables of the Bible. "Ye shall find me *when* ye search for me with all your heart" "Ye are my friends," said Jesus, "*if* ye do whatsoever I command you." "*If* any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." "*If* we love one another, God dwelleth in us." "If we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us." "God *so* loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."† Most delightful also are the possessive pronouns, when we can make them *our own*. "O God, thou art *my* God; early will I seek thee." "God is *our* refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." "I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me: thou art *my* help and *my* deliverer; make no tarrying, O *my* God." "Behold, God is *my* salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is *my* strength and *my* song; he also is become *my* salvation." "All things are *yours*."‡ Precious truth! *if* believers in Jesus, heaven will be *our* eternal home. Both the negative and positive felicity of heaven afford matter for the sweetest meditation. "There shall be no more curse." "There

* Jer. xxix. 13.

† John xv. 14; 2 Cor. v. 17; 1 John iv. 12; v. 14; John iii. 16;

‡ Psa. lxiii. 1; xlvi. 1; xl. 17; Isa. xii. 2; 1 Cor. iii. 21.

shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." "There shall be no night there."* Such is the *negative* happiness of heaven. How glorious is the positive felicity. "The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." "His servants shall serve him.....They shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads.....The Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever."†

Oh! who would not seek after God with all the heart, to enjoy, through the Saviour's grace, such blessedness as this! But, we must have a spiritual perception and a spiritual taste to know and relish heavenly pleasures. No man ever went to heaven whose heart did not go before him. "Where your treasure is," said our divine Redeemer, "there will your heart be also."‡ We find it to be so in earthly things; and it is equally so in spiritual things. O my soul, are thy affections placed on things above? Is Jesus the supreme object of thy love? Are all created treasures lost in the one eternal Treasure, the Saviour of mankind? Canst thou truly say: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee."§ What are the common actings of sincere attachment? They are these five:—

We love to *think* upon the friend who is dear to our hearts.

We love to *speak* affectionately of him to others.

We love to *converse with the person* whom we esteem.

We love to *dwell* with the beloved object of our regard.

We love to *do all acts of kindness*, and to endure much *self-denial*, for his sake.

* Rev. xxii. 3; xxi. 4; xxi. 25, xxii. 5. † Rev. xxi. 3, 4; xxii. 3—5.
‡ Matt. vi. 21; Luke xii. 34. § Psa. lxxiii. 25.

Canst thou, O my soul, transfer all this to the Saviour, and feel, by holy experience, these actings of love towards him? Happy, indeed, are they who daily love to think of Jesus; to speak of him; to converse with him by prayer and reading his word; to dwell with him by faith; and to do and suffer with cheerfulness, all his righteous will. Such "disciples indeed," have heaven let down into their souls, and ascend *by these steps* to the courts above.

How different is the experience and conduct of mere nominal professors, who, though called Christians, are only *heathens* in disguise. They never truly seek after God, nor confess their sins with brokenness of heart. They endeavour to cloak their sins, not knowing, or not heeding, the inspired caution, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper."* They cover their sins by forgetting them; but God has them in remembrance. They cover their sins by denying them; but God will declare their iniquity. They cover their transgressions by framing excuses for them; but God will stop their mouths in judgment. They cover their iniquities by dissimulation; but God will make manifest the secrets of their hearts. Surely, then, such conduct cannot prosper. It must bring down the wrath of the Almighty; whilst he who confesseth his sins with humble penitence at the foot of the Cross, and heartily forsaketh them, through the power of the Holy Ghost, shall have mercy.

O thou adorable Saviour of sinners, manifest Thyself to my soul. Like David may I seek thee early. With Daniel may I set my face unto Thee the Lord my God, to seek by prayer and supplication thy pardoning and restoring grace. Thou hast promised to be found of them that seek thee with their whole heart. O may I have grace in my search for happiness, to find Thee the very source and centre of felicity. Thy presence is heaven below, whilst journeying to the heaven above. Fill me with thy Spirit; and when my days on earth are ended, receive

* Prov. xxviii. 13.

e to Thyself, where joys unspeakable will never ase.

Gracious is my heavenly King,
Sweet employ his praise to sing;
Ever loving, ever kind,
He hath bid me—seek and find.

I would seek Him in his Son,
Who, by grace my heart has won;
Seek Him through his Spirit's power,
Every day, and every hour.

Lord, to me Thyself impart,
Cheer and bless my waiting heart;
Give me mercy, grace, and peace,
Foretaste of eternal bliss.

May I now thy love possess,
Travelling through this wilderness;
Till I reach thy dwelling-place
And behold thee face to face.

There with glorious sons of light,
Clad in pure celestial white,
With my harp of gold I 'll sing,
Endless praises to my King.

XXXVI.—THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

lvation belongeth unto the Lord: thy blessing is upon thy people."—Psa. iii. 8.

oses, who saw with inspired vision the blessedness the righteous, might well exclaim while blessing e children of Israel: "Happy art thou, O Israel: o is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord!"* The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by n; and the Lord shall cover him all the day long."†

* Deut. xxxiii. 29. † Deut. xxxiii. 12.

Man makes many attempts to save himself, but "Salvation belongeth unto the Lord." "I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no Saviour."* "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."† Jesus is the Christ, the Anointed One, who shall save his people from their sins; therefore Jesus is Jehovah. O! that I may unite in heart with David: "Let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice; let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee. For thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him, as with a shield."‡

If we are interested in this redemption which is by Christ Jesus, how calmly may we repose on the promises of God; how quietly rest under the shadow of his wings. When the shades of night advance, we can say, "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only, makest me dwell in safety."§

If surrounded by enemies: "I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about."‖

If living in times of national convulsions: "God is our refuge.....therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea."**

When threatened with persecution:—"What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee."††

When awaiting the hour of dissolution: "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me."‡‡

The man who can thus possess his soul in patience; who can thus confide in the faithfulness, power, and love of God, is truly blessed. In the midst of storms he enjoys a calm; and when men's hearts are failing them for fear, he can lift up his head, knowing that

* Isa. xliii. 11. † Isa. xliii. 25. ‡ Psa. v. 11, 12.
§ Psa. iv. 8. ‖ Psa. iii. 6. ** Psa. xlvi. 1, 2.
†† Psa. lvi. 3. ‡‡ Psa. xxiii. 4.

his redemption draweth nigh.—In times of national degeneracy, when, in the expressive language of Micah, "the best of them is a brier; the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge:" when the caution is given; "Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide; keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom;" and when "a man's enemies are the men of his own house;" in such a time of iniquity and trial, the believer can say with unshaken confidence: "I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me. Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be light unto me."*

Truly this is the triumph of faith! The believer's sky is not always free from clouds, but though *unseen*, the sun is still in the heavens. Jesus ever lives, the Sun of righteousness never sets. The beams of grace on earth, and the beams of glory in heaven, shine with undiminished lustre. Faith can pierce through the darkening vapour, and rejoice even in a cloudy day. "There is not a case of discouragement for which the word of God does not provide a remedy. There is no darkness which Christ cannot remove; no guilt which he cannot take away; no corruption which he cannot subdue." O! what a Saviour is Jesus Christ. Well might Peter say:—"Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious."† How precious is the blood, the righteousness, the intercession of Christ. What a mercy, that there is a fountain opened, not *sealed*; that we have an Advocate with the Father, not an *accuser*. For these blessings we should offer unceasing praise. Our Christian experience must have long since taught us, that this world is not our rest; that here joys and sorrows are mysteriously blended together; but that in Christ is peace, and in heaven is unsullied bliss.

True happiness is inseparable from the love of God in Christ. How can earthly things, however

* Chap. vii. 4—8. † 1 Pet. ii. 7.

splendid or profuse, which "perish in the using," satisfy the desires of an immortal mind? Wealthy persons are not, by consequence, happy, simply because they have wealth. A glare is thrown around them, which dazzles the eyes of common beholders; but the eye of faith can discover vanity and vexation of spirit beneath the gaudy equipage, the lordly mansion, and the show of state.

Oh! that the peace of God which passeth all understanding, may now and ever be the portion of me and mine. There is something extremely delightful in enjoying the blessings of Providence, not only as *pleasant* in themselves, but as the gifts of covenant love. This gives a *double relish* to all the innocent enjoyments of life. But Jesus hath said, "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."* When tried by this touchstone, O what worldly alloy will be found in our hearts, in the midst of much religious profession. Lord! make me sincere; make me wholly thine. Whatever I love, may it be in subordination to my love to thee; and never suffer me for one moment to set up an idol in my heart. Reign in me as the Sovereign of my soul. Sway all my powers, till mortality be swallowed up of life.

That man is truly blessed who can say with David, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance."† With the Lord as our portion, we shall have abundant cause to sing, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage."‡ Our gracious Saviour, of whose resurrection this Psalm is strikingly prophetic, will show us the *path of life*, and finally, through his sovereign grace, lead us into his presence, where is fulness of joy, and place us at his right hand, where are pleasures for evermore. Should the doubting Christian ask—And can all this blessedness be realised? Can such a sinner as I be admitted to this glory? Is it not rather a pleasing dream? Jesus himself answers

* Luke xiv. 33. † Psa. xvi. 5. ‡ Psa. xvi. 6.

the question, to all who truly love him: "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."*

Thus all is "substantial and sincere." If Christ be our portion; if we persevere unto the end, he will receive us to himself, as *His portion*, in the day when he maketh up his jewels.

Oh! that I may have grace to lean only on the hope of his heavenly mercy. Jesus can cause the swelling Jordan to open its waters before me, that I may have a safe passage into the celestial Canaan. At that eventful hour, Faith can make a cheerful heart, and Hope a smiling face, while Love sheds its sunshine of delight over the soul. Newton beautifully observes, that "Faith is nothing else than the soul's venture. It ventures *to* Christ, it ventures *for* Christ; and it ventures *in* Christ." Whilst possessing this simplicity of faith, I may boldly venture, like Peter, on the boisterous lake, and feel its liquid pavement to be as a rock beneath my feet.

To the true believer, afflictions are blessings in disguise. If the Captain of our salvation was made perfect through sufferings, shall we shrink from the Cross? It has been well remarked, that "God had one Son without *sin*; but, that he has none without *suffering*." "The school of the Cross is the school of *light*, and there must all the children of God be taught, to fit them for the perfect state of glory. An ignorant person, that sees the mariner heaving such a weight of ballast aboard his ship, would suppose he intended to sink her at sea; just so, whatever the world may think, the troubles and trials of the saints shall never sink them, but keep them from being overset by every squall, that they may arrive with safety at the haven of rest, having their anchor fixed 'within the veil.'"†

* John xiv. 2, 3. † Heb. vi. 19.

Every trial is intended for my good. My foolish heart would be too much attached to earth if the *spade* were not inserted to loosen the fibres, and disengage the root, that when transplanted, I may bear a richer fruit in the Paradise above. My heavenly Father, whose love and wisdom are infinite, knows exactly what I want, and how much suffering is needed to promote the spirituality of my mind. Shall I then repine at his dispensations of love? To say *practically* from the heart, "Thy will be done," is not the result of nature, but of grace. How blessed, how peaceful is the believer, who can thus drink into the spirit of his Redeemer! A murmuring spirit increases every evil. It doubles the affliction. It adds a sting to sorrow. If our hearts be in heaven, the trials of earth will be light and momentary, for love can sweeten every care, and lighten every cross. A Saviour's love disarms affliction of its sting.

Oh! that we may learn wisdom by every dispensation of Providence; and yield more fruit by every application of the pruning knife. The divine husbandman prunes every branch in Christ, that it may bring forth more fruit. Whatever makes us more like unto God in his communicable perfections, whatever brings us into a nearer communion with him, through faith in his beloved Son, must increase our holiness and augment our happiness. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end of grace and glory. "It should be joy to us, that the eternal Son should come to seek and save us; that he has made a full atonement for our sins; that he has conquered sin and death; that he lives as our Intercessor and Advocate with the Father; and that he will come again to perfect and glorify his persevering believers. Those, therefore, live below the use and end of the Christian Revelation, who are not filled with spiritual joy. Believers should rejoice in their happy relation to God the Father, as his adopted children; in their happy relation to the Son of the Father as being members of his mystical body and

co-heirs with himself; in the pardon of their sins; in the sanctification of their natures; in the prospect of grace and glory that will be revealed at the return of their Lord and Head from heaven. Were they confirmed in their holy faith, how would they rejoice. The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost."

O, thou God of my salvation, enable me to glorify thee by an unshaken faith in thy promises; and an undeviating walk in the way of thy commandments. Under every trial, may no murmur escape my lips, no hard thought of thee be indulged in my heart. As love is inscribed on all thy dispensations, so may love be visible in all my actions. Give me daily to experience the blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered; unto whom thou wilt impute no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.*

XXXVII.—THE BELIEVER'S PATH TO GLORY.

"We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."—Acts xiv. 22.

When I consider how short-sighted we are, and that *all* which lies before us is "a dark unknown," it is our happiness, as well as our safety, to be guided by One who cannot err, who sees the end from the beginning, who knows what is best for us, and who has promised, if we love him, to make all things work together for our good.† Yet, alas! how unwilling we are to acquiesce in his will. How much we want the completion of our own wishes, as if every disappointment was necessarily a discomfort.

With what tender forbearance does our heavenly Father treat his wayward children. If he crosses their inclinations, it is for their good, that he may

* Psa. xxxii. 1, 2. † Rom. viii. 28.

subdue their rebellious wills to himself. O! that mine may be subdued unto him.

We are journeying to the place of which the Lord hath said, I will give it you. At every stage of our journey we should erect our Ebenezer; our grateful monument of praise. "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us,"* must be the inscription; "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,"† our travelling promise for support.

The Christian pilgrim is commanded to look backward: "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no."‡ And, also to look forward:—"Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared."§

It is important thus to retrace our steps, that, reviewing the Lord's dealings with us, we may be filled with humiliation and thankfulness; and to look heavenward, that our faith and hope may be strengthened.—We are too apt to forget our sins, as well as our mercies; and to neglect our preparation for the future, in the midst of present occupations, trials, or enjoyments. It is good to be humble, thankful, contented, resigned, and dependent. The more we sit loose to the world, and the more we shall enjoy its lawful blessings: while, the more we idolise it, and the more it will be made our cross. These lessons we learn in the school of Christian Experience.

We naturally shrink from trouble, though born to it as the sparks fly upward. Trouble is both penal and medicinal. Evil pursueth sinners; but, though "many be the afflictions of the righteous, the Lord delivereth them out of them all."‖ How gracious is the voice of covenant love: "Thou shalt consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the

* 1 Sam. vii. 12. † Heb. xiii. 5. ‡ Deut. viii. 2.
§ Exod. xxiii. 20. ‖ Psa. xxxiv. 19.

Lord thy God chasteneth thee. Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him."*

This is the end and design of the Lord's chastisements. He does not willingly afflict nor grieve the children of men. It is not for his pleasure, as if he delighted in our pain; but for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness. O! that my heart may be moulded into the will of God. Nothing but almighty grace can subdue our rebellious wills, and bring them into a state of child-like submission.—David knew this well by happy experience: "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word. It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes."†

How often do our affections, like silly, wandering sheep, stray from the Good Shepherd. And as it is said of sheep, that when they once lose their way, they cannot retrace their steps, so is it with our foolish hearts. When once we leave the fold we should never return, if left to ourselves; therefore David in his pastoral Psalm, says: "He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake."‡ And in the 119 Psalm: "I have gone astray like a *lost sheep: seek* thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments."§ Our blessed Lord, who is himself the "Good Shepherd," has described his love to us by the parable of the lost sheep; and the joy of angels over our salvation.‖ What a kind, compassionate, faithful Shepherd is Jesus, who gave his life for the sheep, and hath declared "that they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of his hand."** O that I may love him more and more.

When afflictions are sanctified, to us they are indeed good. "The Lord giveth medicine to heal our sickness." His precious declaration is: "I am the Lord that healeth thee."†† "He healeth the

* Deut. viii. 5, 6. † Psa. cxix. 67, 71.
‡ Psa. xxiii. 3. § Ver. 176. ‖ Luke xv. 3, &c.
** John x. 28. †† Exod. xv. 26.

broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds."* "Bless the Lord, O my soul,.....who healeth all thy diseases."† Whilst walking in this consecrated way to glory, our hearts can sing in unison with that of David: "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies."‡

It does, at first sight, seem surprising, that mercies should not lead us to God as powerfully as judgments. But perhaps the reason may be, that afflictions tend to embitter the world to us, whereas prosperity gilds it with a brighter hue. Being naturally prone to love the world, and tasting, in seasons of prosperity, some of these many blessings which sweeten life, we are apt to rest at the cistern, and to forsake the fountain. This state of heart forms one of the plainest indications of the Fall. When God in mercy opens our eyes to see our real condition, then we find that our cistern is broken, and that He only can impart the LIVING WATER. There is, alas! much selfishness in thus coming to God, only that he may heal us.—While he smiles upon us by his bounteous Providence, we remain contented with the creature. How dishonouring to our gracious Benefactor!§

O! how longsuffering is our compassionate God and Saviour! There is something most elevating and ingenuous in David's experience: "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared."‖ To fear God because he is ready to pardon, manifests a highly spiritual frame of mind. Nature is rebellious, but grace is submissive.

To justify God in all his dealings is the very essence of genuine piety. "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right." So does not the carnal mind. We are naturally murmurers and complainers. The natural man is ever ready to find fault with the divine proceedings, and especially if they affect him-

* Psa. cxlvii. 3. † Psa. ciii. 2, 3. ‡ Psa. xxv. 10.
§ See Psa. lxxviii. 11, 34. ‖ Psa. cxxx. 4.

self. How different was the state of David's mind, who could add, "I know, O Lord,.....that thou in *faithfulness* hast afflicted me:"* afflicted me according to covenant love, covenant promise, and covenant truth. Happy state, indeed!

Such assurance as this, enabled a dear servant of Christ to say, when about to leave this world: "My pleasures are all to come." To produce such blessedness, the Gospel must be the *power of God* unto salvation to every one that believeth. Nothing human can impart such peace and joy, at a time when nature is sinking into the arms of death. O! that I may never rest, till I obtain this blessed assurance of faith and hope, which is the sweet attendant on the Christian pilgrim as he journeys towards the heavenly Zion.

If the desire of grace, be grace, for it is from God alone, that "all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works, do proceed;" I humbly hope I have some evidence of being in the way to glory. But when I look at the matured Christian, as exhibited in the word of God, and contrast this picture with my own infantile state, I have abundant cause for deep humiliation, but none for *despondency*. All praise to sovereign grace. There is treasured up in Jesus such a fulness of mercy and power, and such a freeness of will to bestow, that I am encouraged to come relying on his faithful word, and to feel assured that I shall not be sent empty away. O what a privilege to be thus invited and encouraged to cast myself simply upon the covenant mercies of God my Saviour. Jesus never said to the seed of Jacob: "Seek ye me in vain."

It is one of the Lord's dealings with his beloved children, to make them feel their weakness and his power; their pollution and his holiness; their nothingness and his all-sufficiency. The more we are brought under the teachings of the Holy Spirit, the more we shall find the truth of this remark. It is the great

* Psa. cxix. 75.

design of God in the Gospel dispensation, to humble our naturally proud hearts, to bring down our naturally self-righteous spirit, to root out our naturally idolatrous affections. And while He does this through his almighty power, he clothes us with humility, he covers us with the Saviour's righteousness, he implants in us a supreme love to Himself, thus destroying the old man of sin, and raising up in us the new man, which is renewed in knowledge and true holiness.*

Whilst journeying through this wilderness, we must expect vicissitudes. Many things may occur to repress our spiritual exhilaration. At one time "Jesus wept."† At another, He "rejoiced in spirit."‡ At one time he could say, "Father, I thank thee."§ At another,—"Why hast thou forsaken me?"‖

If we are only founded on the Rock, Christ Jesus; if we have only His Spirit dwelling within us; then we may, and ought, to cultivate that peace which the world cannot take away, and which can only be really shaken by wilfully allowed transgression. O! that I may have a firm hold on the promises. They are in Christ yea, and in Him, Amen, to the glory of God. We change as the wind, in the state of our feelings; sometimes high, sometimes low, now on the mount, now in the valley, but our Divine Redeemer is ever the same. His love is infinite, his mercy is everlasting on them that fear him. In Him we may safely confide. However rough the waves which dash against our fragile bark; however boisterous the winds which oppose our passage heavenward; Jesus can speak the word—"Peace, be still," and all is hushed into a calm. How often has He to say to my trembling heart—"O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"**

If it be asked: Has the believer no seasons of dejection except what arise from the weakness of his

* Col. iii. 9, 10. † John xi. 35. ‡ Luke x. 21.
§ John xi. 41. ‖ Matt. xxvii. 46. ** Matt. xiv. 31.

faith? He has. In the spirit of Christian sympathy, he can weep with them that weep; and mourn over the sins of others. How touching is the compassion of the Almighty as recorded in the tenth chapter of Judges: "The children of Israel said unto the Lord, We have sinned,.....and his *soul was grieved* for the misery of Israel."* A different kind of grief was manifested by our Lord respecting the hypocritical Pharisees: "He looked round about on them with *anger*, being *grieved* for the hardness of their hearts."† The tender-hearted Paul was often pained by the insincerity of some, and the unbelief of others. He could weep over the falls of professors, and the obstinate rejection of Christ by the Jews: "Out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears,"‡ was his language to the Corinthians.

Bodily infirmity will depress the spirits. From bodily weakness our spirits may be weak; but this feeling of depression, as it arises, not from spiritual, but natural causes, forms no ground for our writing bitter things against ourselves. The Lord "knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust."§ Jesus did not say, He that rejoiceth shall be saved, but, "He that *believeth*.....shall be saved."‖ If, then, we truly believe with the heart unto righteousness; if we love the Saviour with a supreme affection; if we desire and endeavour to do the will of God from the heart, we may possess our souls in peace, though, from much bodily sickness, we cannot realise the ecstatic triumphs and joys of faith. This spiritual elevation is delightful, but not indispensable to our safety. Some have a naturally sanguine temperament, and can rise above the lowering effects of disease. Others, from nervous affections, are soon cast down, and see every thing through a gloomy medium. But, in all these cases, God looks at the heart. He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.** He will, at all times, speak *peace* to his

* Vers. 15, 16. † Mark iii. 5. ‡ 2 Cor. ii. 4.
§ Psa. ciii. 14. ‖ Mark xvi. 16. ** Isa. xlii. 3; Matt. xii. 20.

people; and enable them to glorify him in the fires, either by a song of thanksgiving, or by a calm and childlike resignation to His will."

Here, then, is solid ground on which to stand. Our salvation does not rest on *feeling*, but on *faith*; not on our works, but on sovereign grace. The tried believer longs to be dissolved, and to be with Christ. It has, however, been asked—Is it right to indulge anxious desires to depart and to be with Christ, when so many duties require our stay? If this desire arise from a mere wish to *escape the troubles of life*, it is not a *Christian* desire. The longing desire after heaven which the believer feels, must always be subservient to the Divine Will. Ready to depart, yet willing to stay, is the proper position of a child of God;—willing to stay and do the work, however arduous, assigned to him by Infinite Wisdom; and yet, ready to depart from dearest, tenderest friends, when the Lord calls him to his kingdom of glory.* O! what a blessed preparation of soul is this. How much should we seek after it. It is a compound of faith, love, spiritual-mindedness, hope, resignation, obedience, and joy.

"We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." This must be true, whether it arise from the "thorn in the flesh;" the malice of Satan, the enmity of the ungodly, or the remainders of sin in our heart. Here lies our comfort, that chastisement is the expression of our heavenly Father's love; that every affliction is administered by the hand of parental affection. What can be more soothing than to recognise a Father's hand in every infliction of his providence? There is no mixture of wrath in the cup prepared by a loving parent. It may be bitter, but it is medicinal. Its effects may be painful, but they are not penal. This assurance reconciles the mind, and enables the obedient child to say,—"The cup which my heavenly Father giveth me, shall I not drink it?" "Father,

* See Phil. i. 21—26.

not my will but thine be done." Such a spirit as this is most pleasing to God. It is the product of his own grace. The more we possess of it, the more we resemble the divine Jesus, who hath left us an example, that we should follow his steps.*

Blessed Jesus! enable me to glorify thee by bearing thy cross along the consecrated path to glory. Give me a holy courage in thy cause; a fearless determination to confess thee before men; a cheerful resignation to thy will under every tribulation. Save me from lukewarmness. Keep me from embracing error, however adorned, or by whomsoever sanctioned. Enable me to discern the chaff from the wheat; to distinguish between the doctrines of men, and the truths of thine own word. Preserve me from a temporising spirit, from a wish to please men at the expense of principle. At all times, and in all places, may I boldly declare my trust in thee, my love to thee, and my zeal for thee. In seasons of national defection, may I be found faithful; and at last, when death shall shake his dart over me, enable me, in the fulness of faith, to exclaim, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

How happy the saint of the Lord,
Whose heart to the Saviour is given,
While crossing the valley below,
His treasure and hope are in heaven.

He feels the sad burden of sin,
And longs to depart and be free;
He knows where true rest can be found,
My Jesus!—'t is only in thee.

Oh! may I with longing desire,
Pursue the bright path to thy throne;
And leaving all idols behind,
Be sealed, by Thee, as thy own.

* 1 Pet. ii. 21.

Whom have I in heaven, but Thee?
And on earth, what, with thee, can compare;
Oh! when this frail body shall fail,
Let me rise all thy glories to share.

Thy word has pronounced the bliss;
When shall I this blessedness see?
"Where I am enthroned in light,
There, my servants enthroned shall be."*

XXXVIII.—THE BELIEVER'S PORTION.

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"—Rom. viii. 32.

WHO can grasp the fulness of this revelation of mercy? The Possessor of all things, if we are his children through the Son of his love, will freely give us all things! We cannot possess a greater gift than the Creator himself; and this gift shall be ours if we truly believe. St. Paul, whose heart glowed with love, has assured us of this: "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."† "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."‡ To confirm this precious truth, the adorable Saviour has promised: "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my Son."§ "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."‖

What a boundless prospect of glory lies before the humblest believer in Jesus!—However low he may appear in the eyes of the great ones of the earth, he is beheld as a KING'S SON by the inhabitants of heaven.—It is truly a blessed sight to behold the

* Rev. iii. 21. † Gal. iii. 26. ‡ Rom. viii. 17.
§ Rev. xxi. 7. ‖ Rev. iii. 21.

poor, "rich in faith," and the rich, "poor in spirit." "The rich and the poor meet together: the Lord is the maker of them all."* For both, the same Saviour is provided, the same Spirit offered, the same volume written, the same promises are given, and for both the same heaven is prepared. All stand on the same level before God. The rich and the poor are liable to the same diseases, to the same diversified trials and temptations. They are alike hastening to the same dust of death, to the same bar of judgment, to the same eternity, to the same abodes of bliss or misery.—Shall, then, the foot of pride spurn away the lowly Lazarus? It may; but, ere long, when death shall lay the despiser and the despised in the grave, the one, though here the child of poverty, if a child of God, shall shine in robes of glory; while the other, though now surrounded by the glare of splendour, if an enemy of God, shall be enveloped in flames of fire. "To the poor the Gospel is preached,"† was one of the blessed marks of his Messiahship which Jesus gave to the messengers from John the Baptist.

A more pitiable sight cannot be seen, than a man sunk in poverty and disease, and, at the same time, sunk in the depths of sin. He has nothing but wretchedness here, and torment in the world to come. Oh! that the spirit of grace may lead every such child of woe to that friend of sinners, whose blood cleanseth from all sin, and whose love can rescue the vilest who flee unto him.

The pleasure-loving sinner, having all that heart can wish, and withholding himself from no joy; casting off the fear of God, and breaking through every restraint, either of conscience or religion, is an object of deepest commiseration. He may, for a time, fare sumptuously, be flattered, and feared by sycophants and interested friends; but soon the pleasing dream will end. The rich and the poor, if rebels against God, though separated from each other while on earth, shall meet together in that place where

* Prov. xxii. 2. † Matt. xi. 5.

wealth and poverty are disregarded, where proud distinctions shall be lost; and where all shall be blended in one common ruin.

The privileges of the believer in Jesus are treasured up in the name of Jehovah, so graciously proclaimed to Moses: "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin."—David delighted to dwell on this precious name:—"Thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious; long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth." "Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee." "Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption." "The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee."*

Oh! what abundant cause have we to bless the God of our salvation, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; who changeth not, nor knows the shadow of a turn.—The book of Psalms is a rich treasury; a casket full of precious jewels. The experience of the true believer is there recorded with peculiar faithfulness, whether he be on the mount of praise, or in the valley of humiliation. The Church in every age has been enlightened, comforted, and strengthened by these songs of Zion.

Happy are they who can unite with David, and say, "Save thy servant that trusteth in thee." "I cry unto thee daily." "Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul." "In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee."† If this be our prayer, then our rejoicing will be that of David: "I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart; and I will glorify thy name for evermore. For great is thy

* Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7; Psa. lxxxvi. 15; lxxxvi. 5; cxxx. 7; ix. 9, 10.

† Psa. lxxxvi. 2; lxxxvi. 3; xxv. 1; lxxxvi. 7.

mercy toward me; and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell." "I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being."*

The believer, thus brought into covenant with God, has access by faith into this grace wherein he stands, and can rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Being justified by faith, he has peace with God. Through the indwelling Spirit, he enjoys the peace of God. By faith he is made a child of God, and receiving the Spirit of adoption, can cry,—Abba, Father. The promises are his portion. They are as wells of salvation, out of which he draws the waters of comfort. The perfections of God in Christ are his Tower of Strength. The Almighty is his shield, and his exceeding great reward. Through life, he lives in the smiles of his Saviour: and through eternity, he shall dwell in his presence and glory.

O! my soul, art thou thirsting after these blessings of grace? What can the world give thee in lieu of these glories? Earthly crowns and sceptres are but baubles, when compared with the crown of glory. Soon will all the splendours of royalty pass away, and the grandeur of the great be forgotten:—but not so, the dignity of the children of God, for whom a kingdom is prepared. "Come, ye blessed of my Father," will the King of Glory say to his now despised subjects, "inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."† To such he now says: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."‡ Surveying this heavenly glory, so richly prepared for the saints, the beloved Apostle breaks out into an anthem of praise, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."§

The Christian, who lives in the enjoyment of

* Psa. lxxxvi. 12, 13; civ. 33. † Matt. xxv. 34. ‡ Rev. ii. 10. § Rev. i. 5, 6.

these privileges, will be anxious that others shall enjoy them too. He will labour in his humble measure to spread the savour of the Redeemer's name, which is as ointment poured out, yielding a sweet fragrance. The promises of God cheer his heart, and animate his endeavours. He knows in whom he has believed, and is assured, that every word of God is true, that His counsel shall stand, and that He will do all his pleasure. He opens the sacred volume, and reads with delight, "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord."* His heart responds—Amen—to the desire of David: "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and Amen."†

He reads again: "The Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day there shall be one LORD, and his name one." "From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen saith the Lord of hosts." "They shall fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun." "All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him. For the kingdom is the Lord's; and he is the governor among the nations." "They shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD." "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."‡

* Numb. xiv. 21. † Psa. lxxii. 18, 19.

‡ Zech. xiv. 9; Mal. i. 11; Isa. lix. 19; Psa. xxii. 27, 28; Jer. xxxi. 34, Heb. viii. 11; Isa. xi. 9.

He reads again:—"All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O Lord, when they hear the words of thy mouth. Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord: for great is the glory of the Lord."* O! precious declaration of Eternal Truth. Not merely one or a few, but "*all* the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O Lord." And when will this blessing be accomplished? "*When they hear the words of thy mouth.*" Not, when they shall hear the words of fallible men, but, "THE WORDS OF THY MOUTH;" thine own infallible word of Truth; the Truth of the everlasting Gospel. Oh! that this word may run and be glorified by the conversion of kings unto Thee. Then will they "sing in the ways of the Lord;" rejoice in thy salvation, and stir up their subjects to praise thee too. Yea, then shall thy Church be protected and nourished; for kings shall be her nursing fathers, and their queens her nursing mothers: when all flesh shall know that thou art the Lord, her Saviour, and her Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.

What can effect so great a work? nothing but almighty power. He, whose name is "wonderful," can alone bring upon the earth so vast a blessing. The work will be as rapid, as it is great—"Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for *as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children*..... Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her.....As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you: and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem."† Oh! how sweet! "As one whom *his mother comforteth*;"—with all the tender feelings, and sympathies, and affections of a loving mother, "so will I comfort you."

The God of nature is the God of grace. Suppose a person, blind from his infancy, to be restored to sight in the depth of winter, when all was leafless

* Psa. cxxxviii. 4, 5. † Isa. lxvi. 8, 10, 13.

and barren, and the ground covered with snow; and suppose his blindness to return, but again to be removed during the height of summer, when all is clothed with verdure, and the earth enamelled with flowers; would he not conceive himself to be placed in some other world? The change is not greater than that which will be experienced, when Satan shall be bound, and the Spirit poured out from on high; when Jesus shall reign in righteousness, when he shall have dominion from sea to sea; when all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him; when his name shall endure for ever, and be continued as long as the sun; when men shall be blessed in him, and all nations call him blessed.

O! what a cheering, supporting grace is faith in the truth of the unchangeable Jehovah. If He withdraw his presence, we shall resemble the barren waste; but if He vouchsafe his smile, we shall be like the fruitful Eden, lovely in flower, and sweet in fragrance. "A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits: camphire, with spikenard. Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices."*

O! Thou adorable Saviour! how can I sufficiently bless Thee for these revelations of thy Truth, for these promises of thy grace. Satan may now be called the God of this world, for alas! millions acknowledge his sway. But, ere long, thou wilt take to Thyself thy great power and reign as Lord Supreme, for thou only art Jehovah, and of thy kingdom there shall be no end. Reign now, blessed Jesus, in my heart. Take up thine abode within me. Give me this earnest, this foretaste of the millennial blessedness. May every thought be brought into captivity, every desire be bounded by thy will. Enable me to realise the privileges of thy people till I reach the temple above, where nothing will be heard but songs

* Cant. iv. 12—14.

f praise, where nothing will be seen but sights of liss.

" Jesus, thy boundless love to me
No thought can reach, no tongue declare;
O knit my thankful heart to thee,
And reign without a rival there:
Thine wholly, thine alone, I am;
Be thou alone my constant flame!

" O grant that nothing in my soul
May dwell, but thy pure love alone:
O may thy love possess me whole,
My joy, my treasure, and my crown;
Strange flames far from my heart remove;
My every act, word, thought, be love!

" O Love, how cheering is thy ray!
All pain before thy presence flies;
Care, anguish, sorrow, melt away,
Where'er thy healing beams arise:
O Jesu, nothing may I see,
Nothing desire, or seek, but thee!

" Still let thy love point out my way!
How wondrous things thy love hath wrought!
Still lead me, lest I go astray;
Direct my word, inspire my thought;
And if I fall, soon may I hear
Thy voice, and know that love is near.

" In suffering be thy love my peace;
In weakness be thy love my power;
And when the storms of life shall cease,
Jesus, in that important hour,
In death as life be thou my guide,
And save me, who for me hast died."

XXXIX.—CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP.

"Love as brethren."—1 Pet. iii. 8.

WHAT a lovely object would the Church of Christ present to the world, did all its members live in the spirit of the gospel. The conversion of the world to the faith of Christ would then be hastened, if all who believe in Jesus were cemented together by holy love, and actuated by the Holy Spirit. The declarations of Scripture are clear and decisive on the beauty and blessedness of Christian fellowship.

"By this," said our Lord, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."* To the Thessalonians St. Paul wrote: "As touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you; for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more."† "The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you."‡ St. Peter exhorted the Christians, to whom he addressed his epistle, to add "to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity."§

Did all the churches of Christ, in the apostolic age, manifest to the world the graces of brotherly kindness and charity? Were there no disfiguring traits in the character of the primitive believers? Alas! we have to mourn over the corruption of the heart, even in the purest age of Christianity! With the apostolic admonition, "Let love be without dissimulation,"‖ St. Paul had to warn the church at Rome, "I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine

* John xiii. 35. † 1 Thess. iv. 9, 10. ‡ 1 Thess. iii. 12.
§ 2 Pet. i. 7. ‖ Rom. xii. 9.

which ye have learned; and avoid them."* For the Corinthians, he drew with the pencil of truth, guided by the Eternal Spirit, the most beautifully finished portrait of Christian love.† And yet, over this very church, for which, on some accounts, he could thank God,‡ he had also deeply to mourn. "There are contentions among you." "There is among you envying, and strife, and divisions." "Ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren." "When ye come together into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating, every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken." "I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would:.....lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults."§ Can this be the picture of a primitive church? Alas! it is. If we ask, while surveying these tares, who hath done this? Our Lord has told us in his parable: "An enemy hath done this?"‖ Satan busily sowed his tares among the wheat at the very formation of the Christian church. Though admitted by baptism into the society of the faithful, they proved by their works whose children they were. And so it is now. Hypocrites, deceivers, false brethren, heretics, and schismatics trouble the church. This condition of the visible church, painful as it is, verifies the words of the apostle, when writing to the church at Corinth: "I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there *must* be also *heresies* among you, that they which are *approved* may be *made manifest* among you."** To such faithful souls, Jesus sent a word of comfort by his servant John:— "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to *try* them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that

* Rom. xvi. 17. † 1 Cor. xiii. ‡ 1 Cor. i. 4—9.
§ 1 Cor. i. 11; iii. 3; vi. 8; xi. 20, 21; 2 Cor. xii. 20.
‖ Matt. xiii. 28. ** 1 Cor. xi. 18, 19.

fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."* Truly this is a word in season. O! that we may be found faithful when the sifting time arrives.

The images employed to describe the unity of the church are beautiful. The harmony which is experienced in the human frame, where, if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it:—the union which subsists between the foundation and the superstructure of a building:—the tender oneness of the marriage state; are all employed by the apostles to set forth the union of believers in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Head, his people are the members of his mystical body. Jesus is the Foundation, his people, the lively stones in the spiritual building. Jesus is the Husband, his people, *collectively*, form the bride, the Lamb's wife.†

Perfection is a plant which bears its fruit in heaven. Here we may and ought to cultivate it with unceasing care, but still the precious fruit can only be enjoyed in the paradise above. Whilst journeying thither, "if it be absurd to expect perfection, it is not unreasonable to expect consistency." Did Christians act up to their principles, did they do to others, as they, in reason and justice, would wish others to do to them, we should behold a blessed change in the so-called religious world. Uprightness and sincerity formed the perfection of the Old Testament saints. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace."‡ Maturity in Christian experience, and ripeness in Christian graces, compose the perfection of believers in Jesus. "Brethren," says St. Paul to the Corinthians, "be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men."§ (Marg. perfect, or of a riper age.) And to the Hebrews he writes, "Every one that useth milk is unskilful in

* Rev. iii. 10, 11.

† Col. i. 18; 1 Cor. xii. 25—27; 1 Cor. iii. 11; 1 Pet. ii. 5, 6; Eph. v. 23—32; Rev. xxi. 9.

‡ Psa. xxxvii. 37. § 1 Cor. xiv. 20.

the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of *full age*, (Marg. perfect) even those who by reason of use (Marg. an habit; or, perfection) have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."*

Blessed Jesus! thy nature was perfect, thy soul spotless, thy whole life without sin, when thou condescendedst to become man, and to die the just for the unjust, to bring us nigh unto God. Grant that I may be renewed in the spirit of my mind; that I may be transformed into thy holy image; and walk before thee in newness of life. Give me the graces of simplicity and godly sincerity. Cause me to grow up into thee in all things. Enable me to forget past attainments, and to reach forth unto those things which are before. Deliver me from presumptuous sins. Strengthen me to fight the good fight of faith. Shield me by thy grace; and preserve me, as a vessel of mercy, unto thine eternal kingdom and glory.

Next to communion with God, there cannot be a more refined felicity than the communion of saints. Every thing holy in principle, and exalted in prospect, is associated with the assurance, that the friends whom we love upon earth, shall be our friends in the presence of God our Saviour.

Worldly attachments resemble the summer showers, which rapidly swell the brooks, but soon pass away; while Christian friendship, the communion of saints, is like a perennial spring. The love of Christ towards his people is the ever-flowing, the ever overflowing fountain of blessedness, whose refreshing streams are the most abundant, when the most needed.

O! that I may daily partake of these waters of salvation! How sweet it is to taste that the Lord is gracious. His consolations are neither few nor small. When we forsake Him, we forsake our own mercies. And yet, alas! how prone we are to forsake the fountain of living waters, and to hew out to ourselves

* Heb. v. 13, 14.

"cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."* This conduct is our folly, as it is made our misery. Our roses grow on prickly stems. Every thing, even our choicest comforts, have some admixture of sorrow, to remind us of the fall. There is, O blessed assurance! a world where all is perfect, where pleasures flow like a river, pure as crystal, from the throne of God; where Christian friends, united here in Christ, shall meet, in perfect holiness, to part no more. Oh! what a resplendent view is opened to us through the gospel. What pure delights those persons lose, who have no relish for communion with God, no participation in the communion of saints. The friends of Jesus, are the friends of each other. They love each other for *His sake*, who is their beloved and their friend. With united voices they can sing:

"Bless'd be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above."

There is something magnetical in genuine Christian love. It attracts heart to heart. In such a world as this, how invaluable is a Christian friend; one, on whom we can rely, and into whose bosom we can freely pour those thoughts and feelings which occupy our own. This world, like "a peevish April day, is made up of rain and sunshine." Here, we are called to endure: in heaven, we shall be privileged to enjoy. Brethren in Christ, whose hearts are knit together in love, shall, ere long, meet around the throne, united to their glorified Head.

How delightful is the thought of being for ever with the Lord. How composing under every trial is the assurance of seeing Him as he is, and being made like Him in the perfection of love. O that my heart were more and more assimilated to my divine Lord. Holiness is the health of the soul. Holiness is hap-

* Jer. ii. 13.

ness. Holiness is heaven begun. Heaven must be place of unspeakable bliss, where God our Saviour anifests his glory; where the holiest affections will in their highest, perpetual exercise; where all the cellent of the earth shall be assembled; and where, e very element of the place, is ETERNAL JOY.

Bless'd is the tie which closely binds
In friendship sweet two kindred minds;
This sacred chain is light and free;
The joy of Christian liberty.

Jesus, of all the friends, most dear,
Is ever to his people near;
They feel his presence in their hearts,
He never from their souls departs.

In gloom, and sickness, grief, and care,
Their burden he will kindly bear;
And if their sun shines clear and bright,
Jesus is, still, their CHIEF DELIGHT.

How dangerous worldly friendships are,
Of sin and guilt the fatal snare;
While Christian fellowship and love,
Unite us to the saints above.

This grace divine, so freely given,
Cements the Church in earth and heaven;
O! may this grace be ever mine!
My Jesus, seal me ever thine!

XL.—CHRISTIAN PERSEVERANCE.

"Faint, yet pursuing."—Judges viii. 4.

HE journey of the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan fords an instructive history to the Christian pilgrim. he opposition, dangers, trials, and temptations, hich beset his path; the unbelief, misgivings, fears, nd rebellions of his own heart; the love, power,

patience, and truth of his covenant God, are all set before him in this faithful record of the ancient church. He can read his history in that of Israel of old, and thus obtain a deeper view of his own corruption, and of God's everlasting love.

We read, that "the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way."* Canaan was indeed before them, but the way was rough and thorny. "We went," said Moses, "through all that great and terrible wilderness," "wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought."† But God was with them; the pillar of fire gave them light by night; and the cloudy pillar shaded them from the sultry heat of day. When they had passed over Jordan, their victories gave strength to their faith; but there remained yet very much land to be possessed, and their motto might be, "Faint, yet pursuing."

"Faint, yet pursuing," is truly descriptive of the wearied pilgrim anxious to reach his place of rest; and of the Christian warrior who fights, under much weakness, to obtain the crown. Though helpless in himself, he is strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man, and thus is enabled to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, to persevere in his heavenly course, and to put his enemies to flight. Often does he realise the blessing of Israel to Joseph: "His bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee."‡ He remembers the divine declaration, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."§ He knows that God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, that no flesh should glory in his presence. Hence he renounces his own wisdom and strength, and relies on the power and grace of Jesus.

* Numb. xxi. 4. † Deut. i. 19; viii. 15. ‡ Gen. xlix. 24, 25.
§ Zech. iv. 6.

O! my soul, what is thy aim, thy great design? Though often faint, through manifold infirmities, art thou still striving to enter into that rest which remaineth to the people of God. Art thou fighting the good fight of faith, that thou mayest lay hold on eternal life?* Canst thou say with David, respecting thy rebel-sins, "I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them: neither did I turn again till they were consumed. I have wounded them that they were not able to rise: they are fallen under my feet. For THOU hast girded me with strength unto the battle: THOU hast subdued under me those that rose up against me?"† Hast thou experienced the promise of the Saviour by his inspired Apostle: "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace:"‡—"The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly:"§ "We are more than conquerors, through him that loved us?"‖

Alas! I feel my utter weakness, and total insufficiency even to think a good thought. I am faint by reason of indwelling sin, for when I would do good, evil is present with me. What a corrupt fountain is my heart. Lord cleanse this polluted spring. I long after absolute holiness, unspotted purity. I know that to be like my Saviour is to be blessed. O! that I may have grace rightly to answer these important questions.

"O Jerusalem! wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be?"**

Lord, it is my heart's desire to be cleansed from all sin, through the precious blood of Jesus. "When shall it once be?" O let it be now, this very moment, for "now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."†† I cannot be happy too soon, and if I have Thee for my portion, if I am transformed into Thine image, I must, I shall be happy.

* 1 Tim. vi. 12. † Psa. xviii. 37—39. ‡ Rom. vi. 14.
§ Rom. xvi. 20. ‖ Rom. viii. 37. ** Jer. xiii. 27.
†† 2 Cor. vi. 2.

"O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved: how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?"*

Blessed Redeemer! wash me throughly from my sin in the fountain of thy blood. Let me not be principally anxious about *external* washing, but may I seek above all things for *internal* purification. My words may be correct, when my heart is like a cage of unclean birds. My attendance at thy house of prayer may be punctual, and yet I be "almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly." The whited sepulchre appears fair and beautiful, though full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. I may outwardly appear righteous before men, while filled with hypocrisy and iniquity. O! grant that *my heart* may be washed from wickedness, and then my outward walk and conversation will be according to godliness.

Preserve me, O Lord, from resting in the outworks of religion. Suffer me not to *trust* in sacraments, or any other means of grace, as if some inherent virtue were lodged in them, apart from the state of mind of those who use them. Give me true repentance and faith, that I may *rightly receive* the blessings which thou hast promised to impart, through the ordinances of thy gospel. Impress upon my mind this truth, that they are only the *channels*, and not the *source* of grace. Thou, and Thou alone, art the FOUNTAIN of all grace. From Thee, all good proceeds. O! keep me from the fatal error of the Church of Rome; and from every departure from the truth of the gospel.

O! Thou "Lord of peace, give me peace always *by all means*,"† and "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."‡ Let me not be satisfied with a *name to live*, with a reputation for piety, while dead in thy sight. Impart unto me thy Holy Spirit; enable me to tread in thy footsteps, while passing through the trials and persecutions of the world.

* Jer. iv. 14. † 2 Thess. iii. 16. ‡ Heb. xii. 14.

"How long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?"

Oh! not for a moment. Too long, alas! has my foolish heart been a lodging-house for vain thoughts! Too long have I entertained these enemies to my peace, these traitors to my Saviour. But, let the time past suffice to have wrought such madness. Lord drive out these hated inmates. Let them not remain a moment longer to defile thy temple. Fill my soul with Thyself, as thou didst by thy presence, fill the Temple of old with glory.

O! that I were wholly freed from every, the least unhallowed desire! The fulness of this blessedness is reserved for thy heavenly kingdom, where nothing can enter that defileth. Yet, blessed Lord, in thy strength, may I lay aside every weight, and the sin which does so easily beset me, looking unto thee continually, till freed from the burden of the flesh.

Here I resemble the troops of Gideon, "faint, yet pursuing." I must wrestle, and fight, and pray, and persevere in the strength of Jesus, the Captain of my Salvation. The enemy of souls has an alarming power, a mysterious access to the mind, imagination, and desires. He can cast his fiery darts into the citadel of the heart, and set the soul on fire. Oh! what burnings of fleshly lusts, what covetous desires, what hard thoughts of God are created by the powers of darkness. Nothing but the blood of Christ, applied by faith, can quench these raging fires. Lord! undertake for me. Save me, a helpless worm, from the malice of my spiritual foes. Thy grace is sufficient for me. Through thy strength I shall prevail.

We cannot prevent the intrusion of vain thoughts. They may be presented to our minds in a moment, at a time when we wish, and are labouring, to fix our hearts on God. Then it is, that Satan will try to disturb our peace, to distract our thoughts, to distress our hearts. His aim is to hinder spiritual

meditations, to drive us from the mercy-seat. To stop the current of holy aspirations, he will bring old sins to remembrance, or something more recently transacted, to fill the soul with shame, and to suggest the doubt:—Am I indeed a child of God? This arch enemy will leave nothing untried, that may check the spirituality of the mind, or draw us back again into his snares. His object is, the destruction of the soul.

But, oh! my Saviour, Thou who wert tempted in the wilderness, and who knowest what temptations mean, arm me by thy power to resist the devil, that he may flee from me. O! what agonising pains does the believer feel, when an evil thought fastens itself for days and weeks upon his mind. How does he pray, and grieve, and weep, as if he were standing on the brink of despair. But, when darkness covers his soul, light springs up. The Spirit of the Lord lifts up his standard, and sighs are turned into songs of praise.

A truly pious, but poor disciple of the blessed Jesus, rich in experience and Christian love, once said, "O what strugglings have I had with evil thoughts. Nobody can tell my griefs on this account. But the Lord has delivered me. Once they were inmates, but now, blessed be God, they are only like persons *passing by my window;* they do not *lodge* within me." She then spoke of the great help which she got through the Spirit, by setting the Lord alway before her; by living, as *seeing* Him who is invisible; by realising the presence of God, as Hagar did when she exclaimed, "Thou God seest me."* She said, that whenever any evil thought was suggested to her mind, she betook herself instantly to prayer, and wrestled with her Saviour, like Jacob of old,† till she obtained the mastery over the temptation. She would often say, "It is good to be a wrestling Jacob."

This is truly living a life of faith; it is bringing

* Gen. xvi. 13. † Gen. xxxii. 26.

into action the principles of godliness; and the end of such a life is peace. She died with a triumphant song of victory.

Oh! that like this aged saint, I may never cease to pray, till prayer be turned into praise, the conflict end in conquest, and the cross be exchanged for the crown. My Saviour cheers me onward, for he says, "Be not afraid, only believe."* "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."† He who hath promised, is the Faithful and True Witness, the Alpha and Omega, the Lamb of God, the King of Saints, the Lord of Glory. O for faith, a strong and vigorous faith, to lay hold upon the promise, to cleave to the PROMISER, whose word shall abide, when every earthly refuge has passed away.

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is."‡ Rejoice, O my soul, in thy God and Saviour, for he hath said, and his word cannot be broken, "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end."§ Rejoice, yea, again rejoice, for Jesus hath declared, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one."‖

O! my soul, believest thou this? "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."** Increase my faith in thy unchanging word. Let me daily hear thy voice, and follow thee. Though often faint, through the weakness of faith, suffer me not to shrink from the cross. May I, like Israel of old, though faint, still pursue, contending with my foes, till I vanquish the hellish legion. Like the mariner, *home-*

* Mark v. 36. † Rev. ii. 10. ‡ Jer. xvii. 7.
§ Isa. xlv. 17. ‖ John x. 27—30. ** Mark ix. 24.

ward bound, may I pursue my onward course, fearless of storms, till I reach the wished-for port. Yes, like the Christian pilgrim, may I brave the toils and dangers of the road, knowing that heaven is the Christian's home, his Father's house, his Paradise of rest.

The Lord he is good,
My spirits to cheer;
In all my distress,
My Jesus is near;
His love and his promise
For ever shall stand,
Through storms, and through tempests
He 'll bring me to land.

Then why should I fear
The wild foaming wave,
When Jesus hath promis'd
His servant to save?
His arm is extended
To give me relief;
His love is proclaimed
To banish my grief.

Though Satan may rage,
And earth may combine
To ruin my soul,
Yet, still I am thine:
Thy favour, bless'd Jesus,
My portion shall be;
In death and in danger,
I 'll triumph in Thee.

I.—THE CHARACTER AND THE PROMISE, INSEPARABLY CONNECTED IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

"Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him: for y shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked! it ll be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given n."—Isa. iii. 10, 11.

HERE is no evil we have more to fear than self-ception. Pride, naturally begets self-sufficiency. any are ready enough to apply to themselves the rdials of the gospel, who have no right to them; ile numbers of contrite believers refuse to be com-rted, although the gospel speaks nothing to them t words of peace.

We find in the word of God the most amplified scription of the *characters*, both of the righteous d the wicked; with the promises made to the one, d the threatenings denounced on the other. If we amine closely the book of God, we shall find our *act character* depicted there; and to this character shall find annexed either a blessing or a curse. rely, then, it must be the duty of every one to amine himself by the word of Truth, that he may ow his real character, either for his conviction or nsolation.

"'T is a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought,
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I his, or am I not?

"Lord, decide the doubtful case!
Thou who art thy people's Sun,
Shine upon thy work of grace,
If it be indeed begun."

ow important is the question: Am I in the Faith? o I bear the marks of God's children? Have I the pirit of Christ, as the Seal, the Earnest, the Wit-

ness of my salvation? If this be made clear to my mind and conscience, through the enlightening grace of the Holy Ghost, then I may freely and fully take the promises for my portion.

The Christian professor who neglects this inward search, this looking into the glass of God's word, that he may see his spiritual character, as a man beholds his natural face in a glass,* will be ready to fancy himself to be something when he is nothing, and thus miserably deceive himself. Such a work of self-examination will be deemed legal, and tending to bondage, though it be the duty enforced upon him by an inspired Apostle: "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your ownselves. Know ye not your ownselves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates."† Respecting the Lord's Supper, St. Paul also says, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."‡

Heavenly Father! make me sincere in my self-examinations. May I come to the light, that so, my whole heart being searched by "the candle of the Lord,"§ every lurking evil may be discovered and rooted out, crucified, and destroyed.

Happy are they who can discern, with humility and a thankful heart, their own state, as justified and sanctified believers in Christ Jesus. All the promises scattered throughout the sacred volume, like the stars in the firmament, are theirs. Every thing that is needful for life and godliness, for support and protection, is theirs; for

> "Jesus gives us in his word,
> Food and med'cine, shield and sword."

O! my soul, be thankful for such a Saviour, who hath said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."‖ Hath he said, and shall he not

* James i. 23—25. † 2 Cor. xiii. 5, 6. ‡ 1 Cor. xi. 28.
§ Prov. xx. 27. ‖ Matt. vi. 33.

do it? Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? He who is the Truth will never disappoint the hopes which he hath raised, or the promises which he has made.

"How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in his excellent word."

For Jesus has said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."*

The following passages set forth the character of God's people, and the promises annexed to that character. The graces of the Spirit, like the radii of a circle, all meet in the heart of the believer. Without the indwelling Spirit, we have no spiritual life. All profession is vain, and religion but an empty sound.

O! my soul, these precious portions of God's word may well cause thee to make diligent search, whether thou art indeed in the way of life;—whether thou possessest these features of the new creature in Christ Jesus.

FAITH.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."—Acts xvi. 31.

"Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."—Rom. ix. 33.

"He that believeth on him shall not be confounded."—1 Pet. ii. 6.

REPENTANCE.

"Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."—Acts ii. 38.

"Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy."—Prov. xxviii. 13.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."—1 John i. 9.

* Matt. xxiv. 35.

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."—Matt. v. 4.

LOVE.

"He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."—John xiv. 21.

"Delight thyself in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart."—Psa. xxxvii. 4.

OBEDIENCE.

"If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people."—Exod. xix. 5.

"He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."—1 John ii. 17.

"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love."—John xv. 10.

TRUST.

"They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever."—Psa. cxxv. 1.

"Whoso trusteth in the Lord, happy is he."—Prov. xvi. 20.

"Whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe."—Prov. xxix. 25.

FEAR.

"Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings."—Mal. iv. 2.

HONOUR.

"Them that honour me I will honour."—1 Sam. ii. 30.

PRAYER.

"Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord *shall be* delivered."—Joel ii. 32.

"Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will liver thee."—Psa. l. 15.

"All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, lieving, ye shall receive."—Matt. xxi. 22.

HUMILITY.

"Humble yourselves under the mighty hand God, that he may exalt you in due time."—1 Pet. 6.

"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, nd he shall lift you up."—James iv. 10.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is he kingdom of heaven."—Matt. v. 3.

MEEKNESS.

"The meek will he guide in judgment, and the neek will he teach his way."—Psa. xxv. 9.

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit he earth."—Matt. v. 5.

PURITY.

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall ee God."—Matt. v. 8.

SUFFERING FOR CHRIST'S SAKE.

"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and ersecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against ou falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding lad: for great is your reward in heaven."—Matt. . 11, 12.

"If we suffer, we shall also reign with him."—2 Tim. ii. 12.

PERSEVERANCE, OR STEDFASTNESS IN THE FAITH.

"He that endureth to the end shall be saved."—Matt. x. 22.

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."—Rev. ii. 10.

"He that overcometh shall inherit all things."—Rev. xxi. 7.

These beautiful passages delineate the New Creation of God. However plausible our profession of religion may be, if we bear not these marks of discipleship, we have no right to Christian privileges, Christian promises, or Christian prospects of future glory. Though sprinkled with water at the baptismal font; though regular communicants at the table of the Lord; though zealous assertors of certain opinions, and warm adherents to some favourite minister; we are, in the sight of God, if destitute of *charity*, no better than "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."*

Lord! bestow this adorable gift of thy divine Spirit, this heavenly love, on me thine unworthy servant. Impart it to all those who have it not, and increase it in those who have received it, that thine image may be visibly discerned in the hearts and lives of all who call themselves Christians, that they may hold the faith in unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life.

If I have received the grace of faith, of repentance, love, obedience, trust, fear, humility, meekness, and purity; if I honour God before men; if I live in a spirit of prayer; if I suffer, for righteousness' sake; if I continue stedfast in the faith; I am a member of Christ's mystical body, and all the promises annexed to these graces are my portion.

As the word of God reveals to us our real state and character, so is it admirably adapted, through the Spirit, to comfort the mourners in Zion, and to pour the oil of gladness into the wounded heart. The sorrowful sighing of the humble and contrite, the longing desires of the loving believer, are answered in so gracious a manner, as would for ever banish despondencies and fears, were not unbelief and distrust so deeply rooted in our hearts. Lord, remove from me every root of bitterness, that I may not be faithless, but believing.

* 1 Cor. xiii. 1.

The following is a specimen of some of the pre-ious answers to prayer, with which the Holy Scrip-ures abound, for the refreshing and strengthening f Christian pilgrims.

REQUEST.

"Save me, O God, by thy name."—Psa. liv. 1.

ANSWER.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou halt be saved."—Acts xvi. 31.

"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."—Rom. x. 13.

REQUEST.

"Be not thou far from me, O Lord: O my trength, haste thee to help me."—Psa. xxii. 19.

ANSWER.

"Fear not; I will help thee."—Isa. xli. 13.

REQUEST.

"O God, thou art my God; early will I seek hee."—Psa. lxiii. 1.

"Make no tarrying, O my God."—Psa. xl. 17.

ANSWER.

"Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall earch for me with all your heart."—Jer. xxix. 13.

REQUEST.

"Cast me not away from thy presence."—Psa. . 11.

ANSWER.

"Him that cometh to me I will in no wise ast out."—John vi. 37.

REQUEST.

"O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me." sa. xxxviii. 14.

ANSWER.

"Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."—Matt. xi. 28.

REQUEST.

"Leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation."—Psa. xxvii. 9.

ANSWER.

"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."—Heb. xiii. 5.

REQUEST.

"Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end."—Psa. cxix. 33.

ANSWER.

"I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye."—Psa. xxxii. 8.

REQUEST.

"O deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I."—Psa. cxlii. 6.

"O Lord, be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee."—Isa. xxxiii. 2.

ANSWER.

"Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."—John xiv. 27.

"My grace is sufficient for thee."—2 Cor. xii. 9.

"Thou shalt know that I am the Lord: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me."—Isa. xlix. 23.

REQUEST.

"Preserve me, O God; for in thee do I put my trust."—Psa. xvi. 1.

ANSWER.

"Fear not; for I have redeemed thee.....When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee;

and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God."—Isa. xliii. 1—3.

These are sweet and precious answers to the prayer of faith. So long as the words, "Ask, seek, knock," remain in the sacred volume, so long we may be assured, that all who seek shall find. Lord, vouchsafe to me a praying spirit, that I may approach Thee in the simplicity of faith, trusting in nothing but Jesus Christ, and desiring nothing so much as to know, and love, and serve thee; whom to know is life eternal, and whom to love and serve, is heaven begun.

XLII.—THE DANGER OF EXTREMES IN MEN'S ESTIMATE OF HUMAN NATURE.

"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."—Isa. viii. 20.

Persons, in general, are acquainted with almost every thing but themselves. The common affairs of life are thoroughly understood; and the various characters of mankind are freely canvassed. They seem to be every where at home, but *in their own hearts*. There, they are strangers. They know all men, *but themselves*. From this self-ignorance arises a great deal of self-conceit. As "all men think all men mortal but themselves," so do they esteem themselves to be wiser than others. "We are they who ought to speak," is the language of their hearts, if not always of their lips.

Pride and vain-glory are the natural products of the human heart. They grow with luxuriancy in nature's soil. Surely it is most important to observe the state of our own minds. The great things of God, like himself, are unchangeable. The realities of the invisible world are always the same. Death

and Judgment, Heaven and Hell, are now as they were when Adam sinned.

If we are, at one time, deeply impressed with the view of eternity, and with the relation which every thing in us and around us bears to eternity: and if, at another time, these considerations make but slight impressions upon our minds, what inference must we draw? Not that ETERNITY has become less important in itself, or less real in its bearings on our future destiny, but that our hearts have become less sensible of its importance. Should this insensibility continue, its deadening effects would increase, till we should, at length, hear with indifference, those very truths which once awakened all our solicitude, and set in motion all our apprehensions.

I see, therefore, the need for watching against this natural declension of the heart from God; and for praying constantly for the influences of the Holy Spirit, to preserve my mind in a solemn, practical, yet lively, frame.

> "O God, mine inmost soul convert!
> And deeply on my thoughtful heart
> Eternal things impress:
> Give me to feel their solemn weight,
> And tremble on the brink of fate,
> And wake to righteousness."

Every thing around me is calculated to deaden the heart, and every thing within me naturally opposes the work of grace. Blessed Lord! all saving, abiding impressions, are from thee. Melt my hard heart; and mould it to thy will. Enlighten my dark mind; and fill it with thy truth. Keep me from the path of error, from reasoning pride; from false and perverted views of my real condition, as a fallen, ruined creature, lying under thy curse, and deserving of everlasting fire. Lead me to the Saviour; unite my soul to him; and make me a monument of thy everlasting love.

Men are apt to run into extremes, especially in matters of religion. The opinions held by different

religionists are as widely separated as the Arctic is from the Antarctic Circle. The ever-varying sentiments of mankind resemble the inhabitants on our globe; they are of different hues, and different dialects; yea, they are often the very antipodes to each other. Hence arise controversies and contentions, strifes and heart-burnings, to the disgrace of religion, and the triumph of scoffing infidels. The Church of Rome, indeed, boasts of her *unity*, but it is the *unity of error*, perpetuated by the assumed infallibility of that apostate church. With her, Truth is fallen, and cannot enter within her portals. All who dare to hold the torch of truth, must be either tortured on the rack, or be consumed by the flaming faggots of her spiritual despotism. Such was her conduct in the plenitude of her power. How soon that power may regain its deadly influence is known only to Him who hath said, "Repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."* O! that Protestant Britain may listen to the Saviour's voice, ere the vial be poured out for our abuse of his unspeakable mercies.†

There are two extremes into which men are apt to run, when speaking of the present condition of

* Rev. ii. 5.

† A Canonist of the highest authority in the Romish Church, and in the College of Maynooth, has declared, "If the judge see that proofs (against a heretic) are not altogether clear and convincing, he cannot condemn the accused, especially to capital or corporal punishment; but, if there can be had a proof *half conclusive*, or even more than half conclusive, then, sometimes in the secular tribunals, the accused is applied to the *torture* or the *rack*, that, by the *force* of *torments*, the confession of his crime may be *extorted* from the accused."

"This is the law taught, at the public expense, to educate Popish Priests in the College of Maynooth; and we perceive by these canons and decretals, in which their bishops drill them in their inferences to instruct the people, that they shall not be a dead letter on the statute book of Rome."—*See Laws of the Papacy, by Rev. Robert J. M'Ghee, page* 211.

mankind. Some extol the native powers of the human soul to such a degree, that one would imagine they had never heard or read of the Fall; or that they had resided amongst a race of mortals allied in power and spirit to the angels above. They talk of good hearts, and good intentions, and good dispositions, and good actions, and good every thing. They magnify the power of the will, as if it could accomplish all that is great and noble. They eulogise the powers of the mind, as if they were equal to fathom the deepest, or to reach the loftiest subjects, in natural and revealed religion.

Others there are, who, in their zeal to debase human nature, make man no better than a mere machine, acted upon by a dire necessity; so that every sinful action, instead of being the product of his own rebellious will, and thus deserving of eternal punishment, is attributed to some secret impulse, over which the man has no control. He does, what he does, because, as they express it, "He is *fated* to do it." Such doctrine opens the flood-gate of iniquity. If men can believe that they are not responsible for their conduct, they are prepared for every work which Satan urges them to perform.

These two statements are equally opposed to the Scriptures of Truth. The path of truth lies between the two extremes.

To those who unduly extol human nature, I would say,—Man is a fallen creature, yet still possessing some relics of his original glory. He is endued with an immortal spirit; with a mind which can soar among the stars, measure their distances, and span their mighty bulk. He is like a palace in ruins.

The powers of the human mind are indeed vast, when exercised upon natural things. How wonderfully has Newton discovered the laws which regulate and govern our solar system. With what discriminating judgment has Locke unfolded the various faculties of the understanding. All this proves that *man*, though fallen, is a being far superior to the

rest of animated nature. He can look before and after. He can reason, reflect, and draw conclusions.

Yet, deny this who can. His natural understanding is dark respecting the things of God. His will is averse from the will of God. His affections recoil from the holy law of God. The pride of his reason rises against "the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh."* He spurns at the sublimity of those evangelical doctrines which are calculated to humble him in the dust, and to exalt the Redeemer on the throne of his glory.

Hence, it is evident, that "the world by wisdom knows not God;"† that mere science, unaided by *light from above*, will never lead the philosopher to the foot of the Cross, or transform him into a little child, into an humble, docile learner in the school of Christ. Yet, blessed be God, his grace has accomplished even such a wonder as this! Newton, the prince of philosophers, consecrated his master-mind to the service of religion, which has thrown a halo of glory around his name.‡

* 1 Tim. iii. 16. † 1 Cor. i. 21.

‡ "He was of a very meek disposition, and a great lover of peace. To his other great qualities, he added a serious and devout reverence for religion. *His favourite study was the Bible;* the prophecies of which he illustrated by his researches. He conformed to the Church of England, but he lived in friendship with good men of all communions; and he was an enemy to every kind of persecution. Sir Isaac had a great abhorrence of infidelity, and never failed to reprove those who made free with Revelation in his presence, of which the following is an instance:—The learned Dr. Halley was sceptically inclined, and sometimes took the liberty of sporting with the Scriptures. On one occasion, Sir Isaac said to him, 'Dr. Halley, I am always glad to hear you, when you speak about astronomy, or other parts of mathematics, because that is a subject which you have studied and well understand; but you should not talk of Christianity, for you have *not* studied it; I *have*, and know you know nothing of the matter.'"—*Biog. Brit.*

It is beautiful to behold philosophy as the handmaid of religion, to see the loftiest scientific mind lowly bending at the foot of the Cross.

If it be asked, can unassisted reason find out God? Can it find out the Almighty to perfection? St. Paul has answered the question:—"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are *foolishness* unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."* Our spiritual ignorance, then, is so great through the Fall, and the enmity of our will to divine truth so bitter, that nothing can remove the one or destroy the other, but the Spirit of God himself. Whenever this operation takes place in the soul, it is altogether undeserved on the sinner's part, and consequently an act of sovereign grace on the part of the Almighty. Salvation is of the Lord.† Destruction is from ourselves.‡

To those who represent man as a mere machine, acting from necessity, I would say, It is true man has no power to come to Christ for life and salvation, without the supernatural operation of the Holy Ghost; but whence arises this *inability* to come to Christ?

Properly to understand this point, would prevent many fatal errors. Man does not labour under a *natural incapacity*, but under a *moral inability* in the performance of divine things. He who said, "No man *can come* to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him,"§ said also, "Ye *will not come* to me, that ye might have life."‖

God made man perfect. He endued him with an understanding capable of contemplating the Author of his existence; with a will ready to obey his commandments; with affections to love him and delight in him; with a memory to retain whatsoever things were pure and lovely; with speech to extol and praise him; and with a body in every way calculated to promote the end and design of his creation.

When Adam fell through wilful transgression, these various powers and faculties of soul and body

* 1 Cor. ii. 14. † Jonah ii. 9. ‡ Hosea xiii. 9.
§ John vi. 44. ‖ John v. 40.

became perverted and corrupt. The blinding, hardening nature of sin, in conjunction with the power which Satan had over him, through yielding to his temptation, was the sole cause of his inability to love and serve his Creator. The image of God, in which he was originally created, departed from him, and the image of the evil one was impressed upon him. His mind became darkened; his heart, hardened; his will, obstinate; his affections, carnal; his memory, the storehouse of evil things; his tongue, an instrument of mischief; his whole body, polluted and unclean. Thus man is an object of the divine displeasure, a child of wrath, an heir of hell! His opposition to the will of heaven arises from the *rooted enmity of his will* to God and goodness; and herein principally lies the guilt and turpitude of sin, whereby man renders himself peculiarly obnoxious to eternal holiness and justice. Is it not, then, evident that man does not perish from the want of any *natural* power or capacity to serve God, but from the determined opposition of his depraved and rebellious will to the rich grace and mercy so freely offered to him in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Describing the state of the heathen world, St. Paul declares, "Their foolish heart was darkened.....God gave them up unto vile affections.....God gave them over to a reprobate mind."*

Take the most inveterate sinner, and ask him, Have you not an equal power of body to walk into the church, as into the tavern or the theatre? Or, does all *natural strength* fail, as soon as the temple of God is proposed to be visited by you?

Have you not as much power to read the Bible, as to read a novel and a newspaper? Or, do your eyes grow *naturally dim* the moment you open the sacred pages?

Have you not as much power to beg of God to help you in time of need, as to seek it from an earthly friend in seasons of distress? Or, does some *strange*

* Rom. i. 21, 26, 28.

fit seize you at the moment of commencing prayer and render you incapable of imploring aid?

The answer to these questions is self-evident. No one can say, that any sinner has a *natural incapacity* to perform these outward duties. Why, then does he not perform them? Because he WILL NOT. The impediment lies solely in the will. His inability is altogether of a *moral nature*, and consequently he is without the least shadow of excuse.

It may be said, and *scripturally* so, that should the sinner perform these duties with ever so much exactness, yet, without the grace of God, ordinances would be to him as "clouds without water;" as food without nourishment; that the Bible would be as a sealed book, and prayer no better than an empty sound.

This is true, for, by "grace are we saved,"* and not by any works of our own. Without Christ we can do nothing that is good; nothing that is acceptable, or well-pleasing unto God. But, is not this, I would ask, an additional argument why we should seek this help, and implore this salvation? Ought not this conviction of our helplessness to drive us to him who is almighty to deliver? And is not this salvation freely offered in the gospel to every seeking soul? Oh! that men would but act in spiritual, as they do in temporal things. If they were as careful of the soul, as they are of the body, we should not be troubled with so many nice and subtle distinctions, and disputations, about the freedom and bondage of the will; such extremes in setting forth the dignity and the debasement of man, such darkening of the plainest and simplest truths of the gospel. How strong are the exhortations of St. Paul to sleeping sinners: "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."† "Awake to righteousness, and sin not."‡

Men scruple not to use the ordinary means for preserving the health of the body, and to apply

* Eph. ii. 5, 8. † Eph. v. 14. ‡ 1 Cor. xv. 34.

er medicines to restore it, when disordered. An cious remedy is gratefully received and carefully nistered. Why are they less solicitous about immortal souls? God has provided means of , and healing medicines, for every spiritual dis- There is balm in Gilead. There is a Physician . Why then is not the health of the daughter of eople recovered?* It is, because the remedy is ought for, nor applied. And why is it not dili- y used? Because men dislike the means which te wisdom has ordained for their recovery. They no relish for them; no faith in them. They d rather remain in their state of natural corrup- and risk its consequences, than come to Christ, gh the appointed means, to be saved out of it. r language is, We love strangers, and after them we go. We love our darling lusts, and will not from them.

Throughout the Bible no mention is made of any t decree of reprobation, sealing a portion of man- to eternal death, irrespective of their character. o one, then, complain of *natural incapacity*, or y *necessity* laid upon man to sin. The cause man misery lies *in man*, and so does his destruc- The inveteracy of the will is the grand barrier een the sinner and Christ; and so strong is the nt of the sinner's will to evil, that he cannot to Christ, the Fountain of Holiness, in true faith love, except the Father draw him by his grace Spirit. But yet, notwithstanding this, every has a natural power to use the outward means ordinances of the gospel. He *can* hear the hed word. He *can* read the Scriptures. He offer up his daily supplications at a throne of e, if not in words of his own, yet in suitable s of prayer provided for him. Let these be duly constantly performed on the warrant of the fol- ng delightful promises and assurances of God's word, and in due time a divine power will be

* Jer. viii. 22.

communicated from on high. "If thou seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul."* "Your heart shall live that seek God."† "Seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you."‡ "The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him."§ "The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him."‖

Let sinners only persist in the use of the appointed means of grace, waiting with patient hope and perseverance for the promised blessing, and "he that shall come will come, and will not tarry;"** for the Lord never said unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain.†† No! the experience of all ages testifies to this sacred truth, that no one ever trusted in the Lord and was confounded.‡‡

Almighty God! who knowest the vileness of my nature, the stubbornness of my will, the darkness of my understanding, the depravity of my heart, and my proneness to seek for excuses to cover my sins; stretch forth thy mighty arm of salvation; and for thy tender mercy's sake in Jesus Christ my Lord, enlighten my mind, rectify my perverse inclinations, regulate my disordered passions, and make me a new creature to the praise and glory of thy grace. Impart a seeking spirit, to me thine unworthy servant, and to every perishing sinner of mankind. Carry on, O Lord, thy work of grace with power, till every soul be filled with gladness, and every mouth with praise; till Christ, the hope of glory, be formed in every heart; till all the world be subject to thy sway.

* Deut. iv. 29. † Psa. lxix. 32. ‡ Hosea x. 12.
§ Lam. iii. 25. ‖ Ezra viii. 22. ** Heb. x. 37. †† Isa. xlv. 19.
‡‡ Psa. xxii. 4, 5.; Isa. xlv. 17, l. 7.; 1 Pet. ii. 6.

.III.—THE SCRIPTURE VIEW OF THE PRESENT STATE OF MAN.

The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is none oeth good, no, not one."—Psa. xiv. 2, 3.

DST conflicting opinions, and contradictory state-s, it is only from the word of God that we can n to a true knowledge of ourselves. And even holy book would not instruct us to any saving ose, without the divine illumination and teaching ie Holy Ghost. Hence, we see the necessity of ng the Scriptures, with prayer for the guidance ie Spirit, whose office it is to guide the followers hrist into all truth,* as well as to convince the l of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.† We cannot read our Bible with any suitable ee of attention, without being struck with the stress which is laid upon the inward state of the . In the very beginning of divine revelation, the dreadful effects of the Fall began to deluge arth with violence, it is recorded, that "God that the wickedness of man was great in the , and that every *imagination of the thoughts of eart* was only evil continually."‡ And again: e Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse round any more for man's sake; for the imagi-n of man's heart is evil from his youth."§ By the prophet Jeremiah,‖ the Spirit of truth this humbling description of the inner man: e heart is deceitful above all things, and despe-y wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search eart, I try the reins, even to give to every man ding to his ways, and according to the fruit of

* John xvi. 13. † John xvi. 8. ‡ Gen. vi. 5.
§ Gen. viii. 21. ‖ Chap. xvii. 9, 10.

his doings." Jesus, who needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man, hath declared, "That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man."*

The heart of man, whilst in a state of nature, is described throughout the Scriptures in a variety of ways, in order to impress the sinner with a deep sense of his wretched condition, and to convince him of the absolute necessity of an entire and radical change.

O! that beholding our native deformity, we may be led to loathe and abhor ourselves, and to seek to that gracious Giver of all good things, who alone can prepare us for his kingdom and glory. As holy men of old spake and wrote under the immediate influence of the Holy Ghost, so what they have recorded respecting the human heart, must be considered as the divine testimony.

Solomon declares, "Deceit is in the heart of them that imagine evil."† "The heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."‡ "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live."§ What can be more decisive than such declarations? Who can look for holy principles and affections, holy motives and purposes, holy conduct and conversation, in, and from, a heart *full of evil?* Surely, if there were no other testimony, this alone is sufficient to cast down proud imaginations, and every high thing which exalteth itself, against the knowledge of God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid.

Lord give me a humble spirit. May I receive thy testimony with self-abasement. O cleanse the

* Mark vii. 20—23. † Prov. xii. 20. ‡ Eccles. viii. 11.
§ Eccles. ix. 3.

thoughts of my heart by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that I may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name.

By the prophet Hosea, the Almighty declares of his professing people, that "their heart is divided."* This is highly displeasing to God, who hath said, "My son, give me thine heart."† Not a part, but the *whole*, for the command is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all thine heart.*"‡ And what can be more reasonable, more delightful, than to love, with supreme affection, the Author of our being, the God of our salvation, the Bestower of all our mercies? But, foul ingratitude marks the character of our fallen nature. Thus God expostulates with the rebellious house of Israel; an expostulation extending to every creature, *even to me;* for how prone is my deceitful heart to evade the *personal* application under the wide extensive survey of human corruption:—"The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."§ "The stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming: but my people know not the judgment of the Lord."‖

This forgetfulness of God is the fruit of unbelief: "They consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness."** We sin, and forget the sin, but God remembers *all* our wickedness. Awful, awakening thought! Every impure imagination, every unhallowed affection, every wicked purpose, though unripened into action; every secret, and to men, unknown and unseen iniquity, is all remembered by that omniscient God, who will bring "every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil;"†† yea, who will judge the secrets of men's hearts by Jesus

* Chap. x. 2. † Prov. xxiii. 26.

‡ Deut. vi. 5.; Matt. xxii. 37.; Mark xii. 30.; Luke x. 27.

§ Isa. i. 3. ‖ Jer. viii. 7. ** Hosea vii. 2. †† Eccles. xii. 14.

Christ, and render unto every man according to his works: to them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness; indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil.*

O! what a tremendous day will that be, which tears the mask of hypocrisy from the face of sin; which rolls away the stone from off the whited sepulchre; which discloses the chambers of imagery, and discovers the hidden evils of a heart once admired, but now abhorred, by an assembled world.

In that day the wicked will bewail in bitter reproaches their forgetfulness of God, and their love of sin; but this bitterness of soul being utterly destitute of every gracious feeling, will only enhance the sharpness of their torment, and give additional strength to the sting of that worm which never dieth. Thus their self-reproach will be coeval with eternity. Hating God, and hating themselves, and hating the fiends who torment them, they will be wretched beyond all conception. "From everlasting damnation, Good Lord deliver us."

The rebellion of the human heart is most forcibly described by the prophet Jeremiah: — "Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea, by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it; and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it? But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone."†.....

.....What language can more forcibly depict the amazing power and force of human depravity, breaking through every restraint, and passing over every barrier? By the prophet Ezekiel,‡ the unrenewed heart is called a heart of stone, hard and insensible. These are a few of those scriptures which, like a mirror, show us to ourselves. Oh! that the sight of

* Rom. ii. 16, 6—9. † Jer. v. 22, 23. ‡ Chap. xi. 19.

such deformity may humble every proud pretension to moral excellence, and cause us to seek to that divine and gracious Saviour, who so lovingly gave himself to redeem us from this lost condition.

Lord, unite me to thyself, that I may show forth thy praise, by a life of true humility, purity, and love. Be pleased to give me a new heart and a new spirit; a heart of flesh. Renew my soul in righteousness. Create me anew after thine image. Dwell in my heart by faith. Crucify every unholy affection. Mortify every unhallowed inclination. Wean my heart, O God, from earth, and bind my soul to thee. Be thou the centre of all my desires. May they all settle on thee. Give me clearer views of my real condition as a fallen creature; clearer apprehensions of thy grace in Christ Jesus; and clearer manifestations of thy purposes and love towards my poor sinful soul, that in the full assurance of faith and hope, I may go on from strength to strength, till I appear before thee in Zion.

Every humble student of the Holy Scriptures, that pure fountain of truth, must be convinced that mere head knowledge of the gospel will profit him nothing. However orthodox our opinions may be, they will avail nothing if they merely float on the mind, but never descend into, or influence the heart. However punctual our attendance on the ordinances of religion may be, we shall only resemble the lip-serving Pharisees, who drew nigh unto God with their mouths, while their hearts were far from him. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith."* "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the *works* of Abraham."† "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do."‡ These are severe words, but they were spoken by Him who is *Love*, and who knew what was *in man*. St. Paul

* Matt. xxiii. 23. † John viii. 39. ‡ John viii. 44.

points out the difference between the outward rite, and the inward grace, which applies as much to Christian baptism, as it does to Jewish circumcision. "He is not a Jew, which is one *outwardly;* neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one *inwardly;* and circumcision is that of the heart, in *the spirit*, and not in *the letter;* whose praise is not of men, but of God."*

With this accords the command of Moses:— "Circumcise the foreskin of *your heart*, and be no more stiff-necked."† Also the promise of sanctification: "The Lord thy God will circumcise *thine heart*, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live."‡

This distinction between the outward visible sign, and the inward spiritual grace, is made by Stephen when addressing an assembly of *circumcised* Jews: "Ye stiff-necked, and uncircumcised *in heart* and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye."§

When all this is brought to the test of facts, we may ask: Was there no difference between the character and spiritual state of John, the beloved disciple, and Judas, the traitor? Yet both were ordained by Christ to the office of the Apostleship? Was there no difference between Barnabas, "a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost,"§ and Ananias and Sapphira, who lied to the Holy Ghost? Yet, they were equally professing members of the Church at Jerusalem? Was there no difference between the *inward* state of the baptised Cornelius, to whom was granted repentance unto life; and Simon Magus, who, after baptism, was declared, by the inspired Peter, to be in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity?

If this distinction of character be apparent, even

* Rom. ii. 28, 29. † Deut. x. 16. ‡ Deut. xxx. 6.
§ Acts vii. 51. ‖ Acts xi. 24.

in the primitive Church, should it be deemed an *unwarrantable assumption*, as some zealous maintainers of baptismal regeneration affirm, to divide baptised persons, composing the visible Church of Christ, into the *godly* and the *profane?*

Bishop Pearson, in his Exposition on the Holy Catholic Church, (the ninth Article in the Apostle's Creed) did not think so. "We must observe," writes this learned prelate, "that the Church, as it embraceth all the professors of the *true faith* of Christ, containeth in it not only such as do truly believe, and are obedient to the word, but those also which are hypocrites and *profane*. Many profess the faith, which have no *true belief:* many have some kind of faith, which live with no correspondence to the gospel preached. Within, therefore, the notion of the Church, are comprehended *good* and *bad*, being both *externally called*, and both professing the *same faith*.....This is that ark of Noah, in which were preserved beasts clean and unclean.....There are *many called* of all which the Church consisteth, but there are *few chosen* of those which are called, and thereby within the Church."

From this satement of the Bishop, in accordance with the parables of our Lord, and to which he himself alludes, it is evident, that if we be mere nominal Christians, our admittance by baptism into the visible Church, will only aggravate our condemnation. The sin of Hophni and Phinehas was augmented by the *sacred office* which they held. The crime of David was enhanced by the favours which a God of *love* had heaped upon him. The condemnation of the cities, where our Lord preached and wrought his miracles, was increased by the *light* vouchsafed to them. Abused mercies, like the blood of Abel, cry out for vengeance. Sin is deepened in its atrocity, when committed against Light and Love. "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long

ago in sackcloth and ashes.....And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day."*

All are equally responsible for the privileges conferred upon them, but are all equally impressed with the importance of their responsibility? Has not our blessed Lord made a distinction between the man who improved his talent, and the slothful servant who hid it in a napkin? Did he not pronounce an encomium of "Well done" upon the one, and a censure, "Thou wicked servant" on the other?† This distinction was not made from the inward state of the heart *only*, but from the diligence of the one, and the slothfulness of the other, agreeably to his own revealed rule of judging: "By their fruits ye shall know them."‡

As the Judge of quick and dead, the Almighty Saviour has reserved to himself the work of separation between the sheep and the goats. He knoweth the secrets of all hearts. He can discern his people in the midst of their frailties; and the hypocrite beneath his specious virtues. This is His Prerogative.

But, he has even now drawn a line of demarcation between the godly and the profane. Did not the Lord say to Moses, respecting Korah and his company, "Separate yourselves from this congregation?" And did not Moses command the people: "Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these *wicked* men."§

What said the Lord to Jeremiah? "If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth."‖ What was the complaint of the Almighty to Ezekiel, when speaking of Jerusalem? "Her priests have violated my law,.....they have put

* Matt. xi. 21, 23. † Matt. xxv. 23, 26.
‡ Matt. vii. 20. § Numb. xvi. 21, 26. ‖ Jer. xv. 19.

difference between the *holy* and *profane*."* Thus the conduct of those priests condemned, who considered all persons, if circumcised, as standing on the same level.

When the God of Israel revealed to Ezekiel in vision, the new city and temple, which are thought to be emblematical of the millennial times, he declared the altered conduct of the priests: "They shall teach my people the difference between the *holy* and *profane*."† What can more strikingly show the duty of ministers to take forth the precious from the vile.

If Circumcision was to the Jewish Church, what Baptism is to the Christian, an iniatory rite, abounding with New Covenant blessings, precious privileges, and promises to those who *rightly received it*: and if the Jewish priests were condemned by the Almighty for making no difference between the holy and profane members of their church; must it not be equally blameable if Christian ministers abstain from dividing the mass of baptised persons into those who serve God, and those who serve him not?

After delivering his beautiful sermon on the Mount, our Lord divided his hearers into two classes, by the striking parable of the two builders. Those who heard his word and kept it, built upon a rock. Those who heard and disregarded it, built upon the sand.

"It is therefore of great importance in preaching the gospel, to discriminate between the different characters to whom the message is delivered, and to separate the precious from the vile. If this be neglected, the wicked will hold fast their delusions, and the righteous continue in bondage to their fears; but, if ministers be faithful in the discharge of this part of their duty, those among whom they minister will be led to a knowledge of their own proper character and condition."‡

* Ezek. xxii. 26. † Ezek. xliv. 23.

‡ Simeon.

The Church of Rome accounts all those to be her *faithful children*, who are baptised into the Holy Mother Church; who celebrate the mass; make confession to, and obtain absolution from, the priest; who rigidly observe the fasts; and blindly obey her dictates. To such she extends her soothing power, even in their dying moments, by administering the extreme unction, and promising that prayers shall be offered up for their departed souls! The Church is every thing. The Priest is all in all. Is this Christianity?

O! that our Protestant Churches may ever guard against the fatal error of thus quieting the conscience, by the mere observance of external rites, crying peace, peace, when there is no peace. Would not this be opening a *by-path* into the Church of Rome? Would it not be a *descent* into the darknesses of Papal superstition? Is there no danger of such a descent? Nothing but sovereign grace can keep us from apostatising from the truth.

As soon as we leave the plain path of Scripture, we get into the labyrinth of error. It is humbling to think how tenaciously some cleave to error, because it is *silvered with age*. Our Lord condemned the Jewish rulers, because they taught for doctrines the commandments of men;* thus setting at nought the commandments of God by their traditions.

It is the arrogant pretensions of the Church of Rome, that her *unwritten* traditions, and the decrees of her councils, are as binding on the consciences of her members as the revealed *written* word of God, even though some of those decrees contradict that word. This she founds on her Infallibility.†

* Matt. xv. 9.; Mark vii. 7.

† The Rev. Dr. Milner, the Roman Catholic Bishop, in his Sixth Letter to James Brown, Esq., says, "The Catholic rule of faith is not merely the written word of God, but the whole word of God, both written and *unwritten*; in other words, Scripture and *Tradition*, and these propounded and explained *by the Catholic Church*. This implies that we have a two-fold rule or law, and that we have an *interpreter*,

By some Protestants it is now received, that Catholic tradition is the only true interpreter of Scripture, even though it is well known that many of the ancient fathers, being uninspired, and therefore fallible men, were dark in some of their views of Gospel truth. Councils and Churches have erred. Where then is infallibility to be found? No where, but in the unerring word of the living God, the Scriptures of truth. Where is light to be obtained? Only from the promised Spirit of truth, who will guide us into all truth,* if we implore his teaching through the merits of Christ.

To appreciate the labours of good men, and specially of those who lived *nearest to the times of the Apostles*, is what every right-minded Christian would do. But to make them his STANDARD for doctrine and practice, is what every enlightened Christian could not do. He will follow them, while they follow Christ; but when they deviate from the *revealed path*, he dare not tread in the steps even of the immediate successors of the Apostles. He calls no man, Master, upon earth. He has one Master, even Christ, whose inspired word is his only RULE and LAW.

Truly we live in sifting times. The mere form of godliness will profit nothing. The true believer must not only dare to be singular in his conduct before the world, by the holiness of his walk, but he must dare to be bold in the confession of his faith,

r judge to explain it, and to decide upon it in all doubtful points." From the Fifth Letter.—"Supposing the divine authority of the sacred books themselves to be established; how do you know that the copies of them translated and printed in your Bible are authentic?" "Manifold is the cause of the obscurity of holy writ."

The object of the Bishop is summed up in the words of St. Vincent of Lirens:—"*The children of the Church*,.....must carefully observe the rule laid down by the holy men referred to..... *They are to interpret the divine text according to the Tradition of the Catholic Church.*"

* John xvi. 13.

before those who are masters in Israel. Much courage will be required to maintain his ground, much humility to keep him dependent on divine teaching, much love to preserve him from bitterness of spirit, or uncharitable judging of others.

O! that the glorious doctrines of grace may be living principles in our hearts, humbling our souls before God under deep views of sin; inspiring us with faith, while beholding the precious Saviour; kindling our love towards him, who so marvellously loved us; and creating a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and that renewal of the soul, without which faith is dead, and religion an empty name.

O! Almighty and all-quickening Spirit, make me thy temple. Take away the love and power of sin. Fill me with gracious and heavenly desires, with holy longings after Christ, my beloved and my friend. I want to feel my soul to be all on fire, the fire of celestial love; my affections to be all in motion, ever on the wing towards Christ; my will to be ever inclined to choose his law, to bear his yoke, and to prefer the most arduous duties, the most self-denying commands, for his sake, rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. But where can I find strength sufficient for these things? Not in myself, for in my flesh dwelleth no good thing. Not from the best of men, for they cannot communicate grace to others. I will look unto the hills whence cometh my help. O! blessed Saviour, all my fresh springs are in thee. Without thee I can do nothing. In thee dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily—fulness of wisdom, power, and love. Replenish my longing soul out of thy fulness. Pour into my heart those living streams which make glad the city of God. Remembering that "God is a Spirit," may I ever worship thee in spirit and in truth. Preserve me from the dangerous error of resting in the form, instead of seeking after the power of godliness. Make me sincere in all my intentions, and fruitful *in* every good word and work, till my vile body shall

e made like unto thy glorious body, and my soul e perfected in thy presence, according to the working f thy mighty power, whereby thou art able to sub- lue even all things unto thyself.

XLIV.—THE BLESSINGS FLOWING FROM THE COVENANT OF GRACE.

"He will ever be mindful of his covenant."—Psa. cxi. 5.

IN the Covenant of Grace, entered into by the three Divine persons in the one Jehovah, before the world egan, is treasured up every blessing. Sinners are edeemed "with the precious blood of Christ..... Who verily was fore-ordained *before the foundation f the world.*"* "The Lamb slain *from the founda- ion of the world.*"† "He hath chosen us in him efore *the foundation of the world.*"‡ "God hath rom *the beginning* chosen you to salvation through anctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."§ uch are the inspired declarations of St. Peter, St. ohn, and St. Paul.

The first blessing which the God of all grace estows upon a ruined world is, THE GIFT OF HIS ON. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only- egotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should ot perish, but have everlasting life."‖

The second blessing which flows to us through he Son is, THE GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST. "I ill pray the Father, and he shall give you another omforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even he Spirit of Truth."**

The third blessing which is imparted to us hrough the Holy Ghost is, THE GIFT OF THE SCRIP- TURES. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of

* 1 Pet. i. 19, 20. † Rev. xiii. 8. ‡ Eph. i. 4. § 2 Thess. ii. 13.
‖ John iii. 16. ** John xiv. 16, 17.

God."* "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."† "When the Spirit of truth is come," said Christ to his Apostles, "he will guide you into all truth." "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."‡

The fourth blessing which we receive from the God of mercy is, THE GIFT OF A NEW HEART. "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you."§ "I will give them one heart, and one way."‖

The fifth blessing which believers in Jesus shall finally enjoy is, THE GIFT OF ETERNAL LIFE. "The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."** "Father,.....glorify thy Son,.. ...that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him."†† "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."‡‡ "These go into life eternal."§§ Blessed Saviour, thou hast said, "My sheep shall never perish," "I give unto them eternal life."‖‖

> "By death and hell pursued in vain,
> To thee the ransom'd seed shall come;
> Shouting, their heavenly Sion gain,
> And pass through death triumphant home."

The covenant made with Adam was broken through disobedience, but the covenant of grace in Christ Jesus is an everlasting covenant. All its requirements have been fulfilled through the incarnation, obedience, and death of the Son of God, and therefore cannot be disannulled. It is *perfect*, comprising every blessing; and *eternal*, perpetuating those blessings. Nothing can prevent the final salvation of the believer but these two things, either God's turn-

* 2 Tim. iii. 16. † 2 Pet. i. 21.
‡ John xvi. 13; xiv. 26. § Ezek. xxxvi. 26. ‖ Jer. xxxii. 39.
** Rom. vi. 23. †† John xvii. 1, 2. ‡‡ Matt. xxv. 34.
§§ Matt. xxv. 46. ‖‖ John x. 27, 28.

ing away from him, or his departing from God. Now infinite love has assured us, that neither of these shall ever happen to *his redeemed people.*

This assurance is contained in these blessed words: "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not *turn away from them* to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall *not depart from me.*"* Here salvation is secured. God in his sovereign love will not turn away from the objects of his redeeming grace. He has pledged himself by this promise, which shall be accomplished when all his sons are brought, through Christ, by the Spirit, into his kingdom and glory.

The way whereby they are kept from final apostacy, to which the degenerate heart is continually prone, is by the *fear of God* being put into it as a holy preserving principle. Hence arise those exhortations to fear, which are scattered throughout the sacred volume. This holy fear is the beginning of wisdom; and is sweetly blended with hope and love through the whole of the believer's experience. Many precious promises are annexed to this state of filial fear. It is a new covenant blessing. Thus we find that the eighth chapter to the Romans, which describes the believer's privileges and character, begins with, "No condemnation"—and ends with no separation: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

How happy, then, ought the believer to be, when he thus views the nature of that covenant, which by faith he embraces, as containing the foundation of hope, and the fountain of felicity; for Christ is the sum and substance, the sun and centre, of this covenant. Believing in Jesus, he obtains the Spirit of truth, the Comforter; and finds this blessed Spirit to be the Witness, the Seal, the Earnest of every blessing.

O! that I could feel my cold hard heart renewed in righteousness, and filled with faith and love. I

* Jer. xxxii. 40.

seem like a lifeless corpse in the midst of living bodies; like ice in the midst of summer's heat. Oh! that I could feel something like vitality and warmth in religion.

Lord, pity a poor, miserable, wretched worm of the earth. Thou couldst crush me in a moment, and send me down quick into hell. And in so doing thou wouldst be infinitely just, and thy goodness remain unimpeached. But oh! cast an eye of pity upon my soul. Thou knowest my miserable state, and my complete inability to save myself from the power of the least transgression. I am tied and bound with the chain of my sins, let the pitifulness of thy great mercy loose me.

Pour down thy blessed Spirit upon me and mine. Deluge the earth with showers of blessings. Cause the living waters to flow in copious streams through all the desert places of the earth, till every heart be divinely changed, till all acknowledge thee to be the Lord.

The need of prayer for the Holy Spirit's influence is allowed by all who hold the truth as it is in Jesus, but the attention of Christians in general, is not sufficiently drawn to this important subject. "Them that honour me I will honour,"* stands upon record in the word of God. We honour the Father, when we honour the Son. And we honour the Father and the Son, when we honour the Spirit. It would be daringly presumptuous in a poor worm to talk of honouring the Almighty, if he had not condescended to declare himself honoured by our unworthy praises. "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me."†

We live in a day of great religious exertion. There is a sacred movement in the Christian Church, which bespeaks some important issue. But what are all our labours, if unaccompanied by the divine blessing? Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but God only giveth the increase.‡ No zeal, however great; no love, however ardent; no eloquence, how-

* 1 Sam. ii. 30. † Psa. l. 23. ‡ 1 Cor. iii. 6.

ever persuasive; no sacrifice, however costly, can ever win over a rebellious soul to Christ, if the Holy Spirit withhold his convincing, converting grace. This is a truth which should be engraven on all our religious institutions. The more we cease from man, and trust in God, the more will success appear.

Hence arises the necessity of uniting in humble prayer, that the Great Head of the Church would be graciously pleased to fulfil his own promise: "If I depart, I will send him unto you," and "he shall abide with you for ever."* O! that this divine promise may have its full accomplishment; then the weakest efforts will become powerful in operation, and God shall be glorified throughout the earth.

The reason, perhaps, why so little spirituality exists among professing Christians, is owing to their not honouring the Spirit in his office-relations. He is the Sanctifier, as well as the Comforter. All means are like clouds without water, except He impart the holy influence. When He descends in gentle dews upon the soul, then the seed of the word takes root, grows up, and bears much fruit. We should therefore never read the Scriptures, hear the gospel preached, engage in pious conversation, or enter upon meditation or secret prayer, without imploring the gracious influences of the divine Spirit.

The Holy Ghost descended upon our Lord in the semblance of a dove.† This bird is the emblem of purity and love, and is remarkable for its timidity. So all in whom the Spirit dwells are noted for their love and purity. But every deviation from these graces, grieves the Holy Spirit. Like the timid dove, he then retires and withdraws his comforts from the soul which dares to indulge in contrary vices. This is strikingly declared by the Apostle in the fourth chapter to the Ephesians, where the grieving of the Spirit is described as in consequence of hatred, anger, and impurity being suffered to agitate and pollute the soul.

* John xvi. 7., xiv. 16. † Luke iii. 22.

O! how rich in blessing is the covenant of grace! No *past* sins, however great, will be any obstacle to our obtaining pardoning mercy, if we only have grace to believe on the Son of God. We are commanded, yea invited, to look and be saved; to come unto Christ *just as we are*, because "the *whole* need not a physician, but they that are *sick*. Jesus came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."*

"If we tarry till we 're better,
We shall never come at all.

Nothing but unbelief will exclude us from the blessings of the covenant of grace, and from the benefits of Christ's death. "He that believeth.....shall be saved."† "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."‡

All who truly believe, will cordially love and fear God. Love, when first implanted in the heart, does not always produce such violent emotions as the common passion of fear. Fear has been compared to a cannon ball, which at first moves with great speed, but as it proceeds, gradually loses its force, till at last it falls spent to the ground:—while love resembles the needle, which increases in velocity, the nearer it approaches the magnetic attraction.

The unregenerate man cannot love. He sees no beauty in the Saviour. The lovely character of Jesus, as delineated in the Gospel, is to such a person like a beautiful picture hung up in a dark room. Its beauty cannot be discovered, till light be admitted; nor fully seen, till the room be sufficiently filled with its rays. The application is plain and practical.

The regenerate love to contemplate the character of God, revealed to us in Christ Jesus, with all the high mysteries of his grace as unfolded to us in the work of redemption. This view of infinite love, when connected with the knowledge of our own state and character, as perishing sinners, will tend to melt

* Matt. ix. 12.; Mark ii. 17.; Luke v. 31, 32. † Mark xvi. 16.
‡ John vi. 37.

our hearts, inflame our love, excite our obedience, and transform us into the image of Christ. The work being an almighty work, we must daily supplicate the gift of the Holy Ghost, who alone can take of the things of Christ and show them unto us.*

How lovely does the character of our Redeemer appear in his interview with the woman of Samaria, when sitting on Jacob's well. How great was his benignity and condescension, his tenderness and forbearance, his love and gentleness, in leading this benighted woman to a feeling conviction of her sinful state; and then to an acquaintance with those blessings, which he, as the Saviour of the world, was ready to bestow. "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee *living water*."† Alas! she neither saw the beauty, nor felt the need, of this precious spiritual blessing, till Jesus probed the wound, and convinced her that he was the Messiah.

Like the divine Redeemer, we should be always ready to seize every opportunity of doing good; for opportunity, well improved, is the golden spot of time. Our Lord knew the character of this Samaritan woman, but he did not reproach her with it. His question and subsequent answer were designed to remove the veil from her mind. With eagerness she made her neighbours acquainted with the joyful news, that she had found THE CHRIST. They heard for themselves, and believed in the Lord. Was not this a blessing flowing from the covenant of grace? "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."‡

What a striking contrast between wrath and mercy is presented to us in Genesis and Malachi. In Genesis,§ we read, "*The windows of heaven were opened.* And the rain was upon the earth forty days

* John xvi. 15. † John iv. 10. ‡ John iii. 17.
§ Chap. vii. 11, 12, 22.

and forty nights.....All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, *died*." In Malachi,* "Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not *open you the windows of heaven*, and pour you out *a blessing*, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

Thus God can, with the same ease, deluge a world either with judgment or mercy. So it is with respect to spiritual blessings; the Almighty can, if he please, enlighten the whole race of mankind in a moment, by the power of his Spirit, with the same facility with which the earth is daily illumined by the beams of the sun; or, as when our sleeping dust shall "be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye."†

As the blessing is from God, we must wait upon him in humble faith and prayer, using the means which he has appointed, and firmly believing that "he that shall come will come, and will not tarry."‡ "He that believeth shall not make haste."§ "Tarry thou the Lord's leisure: be strong, and he shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord."‖

If we feel our hearts drawn to seek God by secret prayer, let us ever cherish this motion of the Spirit; and, if prevented, then to lift up our souls in silent yet fervent ejaculations, darting heavenward, as from *a heart on fire*. This ready following of the Spirit will increase our desires after communion with God, and make us more spiritual in the general habit and frame of our minds.

Blessed Spirit of all grace, Thou who art the Sanctifier and Comforter of perishing sinners, lead me to Jesus Christ; enable me savingly to believe in Him who is my only atonement for sin, the only Way of access to God. Create me anew, and lead me in the paths of righteousness.

Blessed Trinity in Unity, fill me with peace and joy. How wonderful are the mysteries of thy grace!

* Chap. iii. 10. † 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52. ‡ Heb. x. 37.
§ *Isa.* xxviii. 16. ‖ Psa. xxvii. 14.; see also Prayer Book Version.

How vast the designs of thine infinite love! My mind is lost in the boundless extent of uncreated goodness. O! how unspeakably great will my bliss be, when brought by the hand of love into the Temple above. I shall see thy face; be glorified with thy glory; and enjoy the blessings which flow onwards, through endless ages, from the Covenant of Grace.

XLV.—A CHRISTIAN INDEED.

"Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile."—John i. 47.

We read of some who have a name that they live and are dead. It will profit us nothing to be called Christians, if we are destitute of the Spirit of Christ; if we have not the mind of Christ; if we have never put on Christ; if we are not made conformable to his death; if we know him not in the power of his resurrection.

To call ourselves Christians, members of the Universal Apostolical Church, which Christ purchased for himself, out of all nations, kindreds, people, and tongues, through his precious death upon the cross; and yet, to live in the habitual exercise of unholy tempers, unsanctified dispositions, and evil practices, is the height of hypocrisy and self-delusion.

Christ came into the world to save sinners.* He came to purify unto himself, through the Spirit, a peculiar people, zealous of good works.† All, then, who are saved by Jesus Christ, are redeemed from the power, as well as from the guilt of sin. They are made New Creatures, abounding in all the peaceable fruits of righteousness to the glory and praise of God.‡

The true Church is not content with external reformation. Her members are not whited sepulchres.

* 1 Tim. i. 15. † Tit. ii. 14. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 17.; Phil. i. 11.

Christ, her Head, demands the heart, and will accept of nothing less than an internal, spiritual regeneration.

Have we, then, been born again, not merely by the sprinkling of water, which is the work of man, but by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which is the operation of sovereign grace? Do we evidence our regeneration by bearing the image of Christ? Have we been made partakers of the divine nature? Are we grafted into Christ by faith? Are all our hopes of glory founded on his meritorious cross and passion? Have we received Christ into our hearts as our Prophet, Priest, and King? Do we come unto the Father, only by him? Is he the daily food of our souls? Is he all our joy, our glory, our righteousness, and our strength?

These are most important questions. To talk of being *living* members of Christ without the scriptural marks of spiritual life, is as unreasonable as to grasp at a shadow, and then to maintain that we hold the substance.

Happy is the man who knows from sweet experience that he *is* a child of God; who feels the inward witness of the Spirit, by an increasing hatred of sin; an increasing enjoyment of peace; a growing love to the Saviour; and an abiding assurance of his acceptance with God, through faith in the righteousness of Christ. What prospects of glory are unfolded to such a happy believer in the Holy Scriptures! He can rejoice in the blessed appropriation of the apostle's words: "All things are yours."*

Lord! make me a member of Christ's mystical body; a branch of the living vine; a lively stone in thy spiritual building. Then shall I have joy and peace in believing; then shall I overcome my spiritual adversaries; then shall I triumph in death, and be glorified in Thee through a blissful eternity. Why should I not be such a CHRISTIAN INDEED? It is thy will that I should be such an one; for this is thy

* 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22.

will, even my sanctification. Oh! make me willing in the day of thy power; subdue all my oppositions to thy will; then shall mine be the comfort, and thine the everlasting praise.

The name of Christian, like that of friend, is too often stamped on counterfeit coin. Hence it passes current in the world, till detected by an exposure of its base metal. Hypocrisy, in every age, has assumed a character not its own. "Burning lips,"—burning with the professions of love and friendship, "and a wicked heart,"—insincere and full of evil designs,—"are like a potsherd covered with silver dross."* Thus an odium is brought upon Christianity, as if it sanctioned such baseness, while the enemies of the Lord triumph and blaspheme. Woe be to the man by whom the offence cometh, "it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."†

Blessed Lord, deliver thy servant, I earnestly beseech thee, from hypocrisy and deceit. Thy word declares, that "he that covereth his sins shall not prosper,"‡—that he who tries to conceal them may be sure that his sin will find him out. Give me grace to confess and forsake my sins at the foot of the cross, that I may there find mercy, through the blood of Jesus, which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel,—the blood of Abel cried for vengeance,—the blood of Jesus cries for mercy: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."§ Oh! save me for Jesus's sake. Hear his intercession in my behalf. Give me grace to walk as becometh the gospel of Christ, to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing: to walk worthy of him who hath called me to his kingdom and glory.

To be a *Christian* in the Scripture sense of the word, is to be a *disciple* of Jesus Christ. "The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."‖ How important, then, is the question: Am I a disciple of

* Prov. xxvi. 23. † Matt. xviii. 6. ‡ Prov. xxviii. 13.
§ Luke xxiii. 34. ‖ Acts xi. 26.

the Lord Jesus? Examine thyself again and again, O my soul, that thou mayest determine *a point* on which thy peace and safety so much depend; but examine with prayer for the illuminating grace of the Holy Spirit. Nothing is so common, and yet nothing more dangerous, than to deceive ourselves. Hence arises the Apostle's injunction: "Let no man deceive himself."*

Jesus came to seek and to save that which is lost.†

Have I seen my undone state by nature? Have I seen the Holiness of God in the mirror of his divine law? Has the conviction of my guilt and misery laid me in the dust before him? Am I emptied of all self-dependence, self-seeking, and self-righteousness? Under a deep sense of my own helplessness and wretchedness, have I fled to Christ for life and salvation? Can I rejoice that through him there is blood to atone, righteousness to justify, grace to sanctify, strength to support, and consolation to cheer in every time of need?

Faith purifies the heart.‡

Have I that faith in Christ which purifies the heart? Do I feel indwelling corruption to be the very grief and burden of my soul? Am I daily striving and warring against it in the strength of my Redeemer? Do I find its power grow weaker, and holy affections become more vigorous and powerful, more constant and natural, more ardent and abiding?

Faith worketh by love.§

Does my faith work by love? Is Christ the first object of my desire, the very joy and rejoicing of my heart? Do I love God the Father, who showed such love to me, in giving his only Son for my redemption? Do I love God the Son, who so willingly became man, that he might bleed and die for

* 1 Cor. iii. 18. † Matt. xviii. 11. ‡ Acts xv. 9.
§ Gal. v. 6.

me? Do I love God the Holy Ghost, who so graciously applies this great salvation to my soul, and who brings me into the bonds of the everlasting covenant? Does my love to the ever-blessed Trinity manifest itself by a lively gratitude, a uniform obedience, and an earnest endeavour to promote the glory of God?

Lord, how defective is my obedience, how cold is my love, how feeble are my endeavours! What sin rises in my mind! What idle words pass my lips! What inconsistencies mark my actions!

When I come to examine what I *ought* to be, yea, what I *must* be, if ever I am saved, and compare this with what I *am*, O! what cause do I find for humiliation and sorrow. What need do I see of a precious Saviour, to work in me all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power. When viewed in the sight of my sins, how precious does Jesus appear. He is, indeed, the UNSPEAKABLE GIFT.

Does my faith work also by love to man? Are my friends the friends of Jesus? Do I love all them who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, by whatever name they may be distinguished among men, or in whatever country they may dwell? Is my heart so contracted that it can only contain those of my own religious communion; or, can it embrace the *Christian indeed*, though in some *non-essentials* he may differ from me? Do I love the image of Christ wherever I behold it? Are all the true, living members of Christ's mystical body regarded by me as *brethren*? Do I, with joy, anticipate the period when, saved by grace, I shall join the ten thousand times ten thousand, and the thousands of thousands gathered out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, who shall swell the everlasting chorus: "Worthy is the Lamb"?* Can I now sing in hope of this heavenly blessedness: "We praise thee, O! God, we acknowledge thee to be the Lord. *All the*

* Rev. v. 12.

earth doth worship thee, the Father everlasting. *The holy Church throughout the world* doth acknowledge thee, the Father of an infinite Majesty, thine honourable, true, and only Son; also the Holy Ghost the Comforter?" Can I, from the heart, pray for the good estate of the *Universal Church*, that it may be so guided and governed by the Holy Spirit; that all who *profess* and *call themselves Christians*, may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of Spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life? Is it my heart's desire that the Divine Majesty would inspire continually *the Universal Church* with the Spirit of truth, unity, and concord, that all they who confess his holy name, may agree in the truth of his holy word, and live in unity and godly love?

Did this spirit of brotherly love, which breathes throughout the services of the Church of England, influence all who *call themselves Christians*, we should behold a revival of primitive unity in the essentials of Christianity, and a return of that primitive charity which compelled even the persecuting heathens to exclaim: "See how these Christians love one another."

Does my faith work by love, even towards those who may despitefully use me, and say all manner of evil against me falsely for Christ's sake? Do I love them so as to pray for them, and to be at all times ready to do them good? Is sin the only object of my hatred, both in myself and others? Can I pity the sinner whilst I abhor his sin? Is holiness the object of my wishes, and the subject of my prayers? Whilst I cherish a love of complacency towards all the children of God, do I feel a love of compassion towards his enemies and mine?

*Faith overcometh the world.**

Does my faith enable me to overcome the world? Have I learned in the school of Christ, the shortness,

* 1 John v. 4.

the emptiness, the vanity, the insufficiency, the uncertainty of all earthly comforts, pleasures, honours, riches, and delights? Has this knowledge had a practical effect, by causing me to renounce the world both in heart and affection? Whilst I am *in* the world, can I, with sincerity, say that I am not *of* the world? While my hands are engaged in the diligent prosecution of my lawful calling according to the will of God, is my heart totally disengaged, and disentangled from earthly idols, and wholly given up to God, through Christ?

Have I come out from among the carnal part of mankind, which in Scripture is called the world, though *nominally Christian*, and have I joined myself to that little flock, that part of the *true Church* who are travelling Zionward, and of whom Christ said: "It is my Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom?"*

If faith has produced these blessed effects in any soul, or if these gracious operations of the Spirit are daily ripening and coming to maturity, then is that person a CHRISTIAN INDEED. He is a vessel of mercy afore prepared unto glory. He is an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ.

O! Almighty Saviour, make me one of thy disciples, a Christian indeed. Perfect the good work of thy grace in me, and when thou hast prepared me for thyself, receive me into the place prepared for me. Impress my mind with this truth, that heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people; that all who are redeemed by thy blood are made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light; that all who serve thee here shall follow thee, whithersoever thou goest; for with thee is heaven, and joy, and love.

O! how rich, how extensive are thy promises! The Christian parent may well rejoice, while viewing his offspring and thy gracious purposes of mercy: "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring; and they shall spring

* Luke xii. 32.

up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses."* O! that the young plants in thy vineyard may all become trees of righteousness, bearing abundant fruit to thy glory!

Ye tender youths, whose opening day
Of life, will quickly pass away:
Would you rich in virtue be,
Faith, and sweet humility,
Come to Jesus—near his side,
You will find a faithful Guide.

Allur'd by folly's tempting ways,
Forgetful of a Saviour's grace,
Oft the young, by promise fair,
Caught in pleasure's fatal snare,
Mourn their choice with bitter tears,
Through a range of following years.

Happy the youth whose *first* desires,
To Jesus and his grace aspires:
Blessed portion shall he find,
Constant pleasures of the mind,
Peace, sweet peace, will Christ bestow,
Peace, which worldlings cannot know.

The Spirit dwelling in his heart,
Will every glorious gift impart,
Heavenly Wisdom he will give,
How to die, and how to live.
Thus shall pure and holy Truth,
Guide and guard the pious youth.

The Saviour calls—O hear his voice,
Make him your delightful choice;
Then your soul shall surely know
Whence the living waters flow;
From the Mount of Calvary,
Where He bled and died for thee.

* Isa. xliv. 3, 4.

XLVI.—THE TESTIMONY OF CONSCIENCE.

"Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world."—2 Cor. i. 12.

To have a good conscience is an unspeakable blessing. But what is it that makes the conscience good? Saul of Tarsus thought that he had a good conscience, while he was blindly persecuting the Church of Christ. When enumerating his legal grounds for confidence, he mentions "zeal, persecuting the Church."* In his powerful appeal before Agrippa, he declared: "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth."† To the Galatians he writes: "Beyond measure I persecuted the Church of God, and wasted it."‡ In all this, Saul of Tarsus fulfilled the words of Christ: "The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he *doeth God service*."§ And whence arose this fiery zeal? Our Lord tells us: "And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me."‖ It arose from ignorance of God and of Christ. When the eyes of Saul were enlightened by the Spirit, he saw himself to be a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious; yea, the chief of sinners.**

How different were his views and feelings when he became an Apostle of Jesus Christ. While beholding the council, before whom he stood as the prisoner of Jesus Christ, he could say: "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day."†† To Festus he boldly said: "This I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call

* Phil. iii. 6. † Acts xxvi. 9.
‡ Gal. i. 13. § John xvi. 2. ‖ John xvi. 3.
** 1 Tim. i. 13, 15. †† Acts xxiii. 1.

heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and the prophets; and have hope toward God,.....that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust; and herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men."*

A good conscience is the sunshine of the soul. It is the work of grace. When the sinner is awakened to a sense of his guilt and danger; when he is led to see the all-sufficiency of the Atonement of Christ; when he is enabled by faith to receive the atonement; and when the precious blood of Christ is applied to his conscience by the Spirit, then the soul, bowed down under a sense of guilt, obtains rest, and the conscience, goaded by tormenting fears, enjoys peace. The conscience, thus pacified and purified, becomes, in the scriptural sense of the term, a *good conscience*. Almighty God is no longer dreaded as an enemy, but feared as a father; and sin is no longer cherished as a friend, but resisted as a foe.

St. Paul describes this happy state when exhorting the Hebrew Christians to steadfastness in the faith: "Having, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled *from an evil conscience*, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised."†

To Timothy, the Apostle also writes: "The end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned."‡ Happy, then, are they who hold "the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience,"§ a con-

* Acts xxiv. 14—16. † Heb. x. 19—23. ‡ 1 Tim. i. 5.
§ 1 Tim. iii. 9.

science purged from dead works to serve the living God.

A good conscience is tender, alive to the approach of evil, and sensible of the subtle workings of indwelling sin. It is the faithful monitor of the soul. It speaks for God, and in accordance with his word. A scrupulous conscience is always inconsistent. It strains at a gnat and swallows a camel. A seared conscience is devoutly to be dreaded; it is the presage of eternal death. "Ephraim is joined to idols: *let him alone!*"*

The true believer in Jesus can rejoice in the testimony of his conscience, this inward witness to the sincerity of his profession. He can say with Peter: "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."† And with Paul: "I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience."‡

Lord give me an enlightened conscience, sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, jealous of sin, and ever awake to the motions of the enemy. Keep me watchful, and prayerful, and dependent on thy grace. Preserve me from all blindness and hardness of heart. Teach me thy way, and enable me to walk therein, even that way of holiness, in which all the Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles walked; that way in which all the redeemed are found, as they pass from the earthly to the heavenly Canaan.

Simplicity and godly sincerity are two precious ornaments which adorn the Christian character. Faith is the uniting grace; love is the active principle, which keeps the wheels in motion; hope is the sustaining grace. How wonderful is the work of God in the soul of man. When a divine light irradiates the understanding, directs the will, and spiritualises the affections, the sinner becomes a new creature. O! that this blessedness may be mine.

Lord! pity a poor wanderer from thy fold. Without thee I must perish. "O save me for thy

* Hosea iv. 17. † John xxi. 17. ‡ 2 Tim. i. 3.

mercies' sake."* "Remember me with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation; that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance."† I want, O Lord, to love thee. I want to feel my heart continually drawn to thee. I am miserable when my heart wanders from thee, and yet, alas! I am perpetually wandering. Restore my soul; lead me in the paths of righteousness for thy name's sake. Lord! unite my heart to fear thy name. Uphold my goings in thy way. Preserve me, O God, from hypocrisy and vain-glory. Let me ever remember that Thou art a Spirit; that true religion is altogether of a spiritual nature; and therefore, that thou must be worshipped in spirit and in truth.

Guard me from the subtle poison of praise and flattery. Make me deeply sensible of my guilt and wretchedness, and of thy righteousness and fulness. May I never seek the praise of men, nor be grieved if I am despised for thy sake. But may I rather rejoice, when I am counted worthy to suffer shame for thy name. Give me grace to live to thee and for thee. May I delight in thy will.

Keep me from a worldly spirit. I have daily to mourn over the workings of a worldly spirit. O! wean my heart from earth, and fix it upon thyself alone. Enlarge my views of holiness and heaven. Increase my longings after purity and peace. Let me not rest till my desires be abundantly satisfied in thy presence where is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand where are pleasures for evermore. Till that happy period arrive, may my rejoicing be this, the testimony of my conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, I have my conversation in the world.

To set the Lord always before us is the great secret of holy living. This we can only do, by living a life of faith in the Son of God; for faith is the eye,

* Psa. vi. 4, xxxi. 16. † Psa. cvi. 4, 5.

which, by steadily looking unto Jesus, keeps the soul in the narrow path which leads unto life eternal.

We must draw an evidence of our real state and character, not so much from our public, as from our private conduct: not so much from our words, as from our thoughts. In the company of truly pious persons, where a holy atmosphere surrounds us, we are constrained to assume an air of decorum and sobriety: but, when we are in the midst of worldly persons, if we then throw off the garment of restraint, and enter into their spirit and conversation, we have an indisputable evidence that our hearts, whatever our *outward profession* may be, are not right with God.

When no eye sees us but the omniscient eye of God, are we as circumspect as when surrounded by our fellow-creatures? If we are not, we may surely conclude, that the fear of man, and the love of human estimation, is more operative in our souls than the fear of God; and that our consciences are asleep, or in an unenlightened state.

So with respect to thoughts, which are unknown to those around us; if we are secretly *indulging* thoughts which are all intimately known to the heart-searching God, whilst we would not *dare* to utter those thoughts to friends about us; must we not conclude, that with all our professions of piety, we are practisers of iniquity, and in the utmost peril of everlasting damnation? The pure in heart shall see God.* To keep the heart with all diligence, to set the Lord always before us, to live as *seeing Him* who is invisible, to act at all times with an eye to his approbation, is the very essence of true religion, the very evidence of the simplicity and sincerity of our motives.

This state of heart is the work of the Spirit; a progressive work. It meets with much opposition from our carnal nature, and the force of indwelling sin; but still it goes on toward perfection. In heaven

* Matt. v. 8.

the work is complete when the law in the members shall no longer war against the law of the mind. Till then we must fight, and wrestle, and struggle by faith and prayer. Jesus is almighty. Through Him we shall overcome. His grace is sufficient for us, and he has promised that it shall prevail.

If we are sincere in our desires after the attainment of the truth; if we have simplicity of intention in our search for it, we shall be anxious, savingly to know these four things:—

The state of our own hearts;

The way of salvation by grace, through Jesus Christ;

The path of duty as revealed in the Gospel;

The means for growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

To know these experimentally and practically, will enable us to glorify God by a life of holy obedience. We shall then daily realise the presence of God; have an eye continually to the providence of God; and draw comfort and strength from the promises of God. In prosperity we shall be humble, in adversity resigned, in all conditions thankful and dependent.

O! blessed Lord, impart unto thy poor unworthy child these spiritual blessings. Give me an insight into myself. Preserve me from self-delusion and hypocrisy. Let me never *study appearances*, but labour after simplicity and godly sincerity. Make me ever an humble suppliant at thy mercy-seat, a thankful recipient of thy bounties. Watch over me, O Lord, for good. Guard me from the snares and wiles of the devil. Keep me from a covetous mind. Wean my affections from this vain world, and cause me to set them on things above. Be thou my portion. Make me more spiritually-minded, more alive to thee, more solicitous about the good of others. May it be my daily intention to please thee, my daily endeavour to glorify thy name. Give me the blessing of a good conscience, a conscience sprinkled with the blood

of Jesus, a conscience enlightened by the Spirit of truth. Shine on me with beams of love, till, through thy grace, I shine in the heavenly temple with beams of glory.

XLVII.—THE CHRISTIAN'S REST.

"We which have believed do enter into rest."—Heb. iv. 3.

As there is a heaven in going to heaven, so there is a rest, ere we enter into the rest of Paradise.

The soul which loves Christ supremely, which abides in him by faith, and in which Christ abides by his Spirit, enjoys while here a heavenly rest. Jesus is the believer's resting-place, his place of refuge. It is the believer's delightful privilege to hold communion with the Saviour, to taste his love, to possess his peace. O! how sweet is true religion when felt in all its regenerating power! Lord grant that I may thus experience the joys of thy salvation.

The world is indeed but a wilderness of care; the region of sin and sorrow. Troubles, like thorns and thistles, spring up around us, and alas! too frequently they spring up *within us*. Unbelief, slavish fear of God, distrust of his providence, indulged lustings of the flesh, pride, and such like poisonous weeds, corrupt the soul and fill it with vexation.

Where, then, can true rest and peace be found in the midst of such anxieties? Surely no where but in Jesus. How true is his declaration: "In the world ye shall have tribulation."* How unspeakably refreshing is his promise: "In me ye shall have peace."* Here, under all circumstances, we must expect to meet with trials. It is therefore our wisdom to fortify ourselves against them, by flying to the Strong for strength, and to the Comforter for consolation.

* John xvi. 33.

What we want is faith, that faith which is of the operation of the Spirit, that faith which is called "the faith of God's elect."* Without this faith it is impossible to please God; because, whatever springs not from this true faith in Christ is sin. The indwelling of this holy principle is known by its fruits. It transforms the whole inner man, through the power of the Holy Ghost, into a likeness to Jesus Christ. It purifies the soul through the cleansing efficacy of the blood of Jesus. It works by love through the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost. It enables the believer to renounce the vanities of a world at enmity with God. It opens to his view eternal glories, and gives him a foretaste of that rest which remaineth to the people of God. What a blessing then is faith, and yet how rare a gift to man; and why? because he desires it not; he asks not for it; he holds fast deceit; he refuses to return.

Awful, indeed, are the words of Jesus: "When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"† We seem to be approaching a time of trial. At this moment there is a restlessness, a desire for change, not alas! from sin to holiness. The minds of men are anxious to throw off ancient restraints and to breathe what they term the air of freedom. Delusive expectation! so long as the heart is enchained by sin. The political free-man is too often Satan's bondman. While he throws off the salutary bonds of social order, he puts on the galling yoke of unbridled passions, and wild licentiousness. Infidelity revels in the storm, and tracks its path with blood!

The Church of Rome has long held the world in spiritual bondage. She has studiously withheld the light of truth from her members, and thus has fostered infidelity in her bosom. To elevate her traditions, and enforce her decrees, she lowers the book of God. She raises doubts and mistrusts respecting the blessed Scriptures. She starts difficulties of interpretation, and obscurities without number, that her members

* Tit. i. 1. † Luke xviii. 8.

may blindly follow the Church, hear the Church, and believe nothing but what the Church teaches. By this means she raises her priesthood above the oracles of God, for to deny the decretals of her Popes, Cardinals, and Councils, is the way into the dungeons of the Inquisition, to the fires of the Auto de fé.*

* *Extracts from a Defence of Roman Catholic Principles, in a Letter to a Protestant Minister, by Gallitzin.*

"We believe that Jesus Christ has established the holy Catholic Church as the supreme tribunal to regulate our faith, or, in other words, to keep the precious deposit of Revelation unaltered, to explain to us (without any possibility of error) the meaning of every part of holy writ necessary for salvation, and likewise to preserve and transmit to posterity undefiled, all that part of Christ's divine doctrine which was only delivered by word of mouth either by Christ or his Apostles." "We believe that the unwritten word of God, transmitted to us by tradition, is entitled to the very same respect as the written word." "When the Church has *pronounced*, the controversy is *settled*, doubts vanish, and we are as certain as if Jesus Christ himself had spoken !!"

"Holy writ (although certainly God's word) was not intended to be our Supreme Judge in matters of faith." "We believe that the Catholic Church is this living, visible, and supreme Authority." "We believe this authority resides in the body of Christ's Ministers, the pastors of the Catholic Church, and the lawful successors of those pastors whom Jesus Christ appointed and invested with full authority to discharge the functions of his ministry. To that body of pastors we look for heavenly instructions, in them we see the successors of Jesus Christ, invested by him with the same authority which he himself had received from his heavenly Father." "The Spirit of truth never has, and never will depart from the pastors of Christ's Churches."

Such are the dogmas of the Church of Rome, founded on her infallibility. And woe be to those who (when she has power) dare to resist her authority. The venerable Bishop Hall by a familiar simile strikingly shows the folly of these Popish tenets, which would substitute the decisions of fallible men for the infallible wisdom of God.

"The Scripture is the sun; the Church is the clock, whose hand points to, and whose sound tells us, the hour of the day. The sun we know to be *sure*, and regularly constant in his motion; the clock,

When a ray of light darts into this region of darkness from the torch of human reason or philosophy, by which her members are led to see the craft of her priestly domination, and the mummery of her services; then a spirit of emancipation is created, and being ignorant of the truth as it is in Jesus, they fly from superstition to infidelity, from the despotism of Popery to the anarchy of atheism. Witness France and all her revolutionary horrors, the offspring of an infidel philosophy, bursting the barriers of Papal despotism, and plunging into a sea of blood. The Church of Rome, it has been said, may perhaps, die from the sting of infidelity, that viper which she has nurtured in her own bosom. Such is often the retributive justice of God. How remarkably was her power weakened, for a season, by the reign of infidelity in France.

Nothing but heavenly truth can guide men aright through this tempestuous world. If once we leave our divine Compass, the word of God, we are at the mercy of every wind of doctrine, we are carried hither and thither, as the tide or storm may drive us, and at length are dashed against the rocks and perish.

Lord! graciously preserve thy true Church amidst every tempest. Increase the light of Truth,

as it may fall out, may go too fast or too slow. We are wont to look at, and listen to the clock, to know the time of the day; but where we find the *variation sensible*, to believe *the sun against the clock, not the clock against the sun*. As, then, we should condemn him of much folly that should profess to trust the clock rather than the sun, so we cannot but justly tax the MISCREDULITY OF THOSE WHO WILL RATHER TRUST TO THE CHURCH THAN TO THE SCRIPTURES."

If this conclusion, which the pious Bishop of Norwich draws from his simile be correct, it cannot be consistent with sound Protestantism, with the doctrines of the Reformation, or with the Articles of the Church of England, to assert that there is an *infallible* interpreter of Scripture, the Holy Catholic Church, since Churches and Councils have erred and do err to this day. Witness the Church of Rome, the Greek Church, and other Christian Communions.

and bring all nations to the obedience of faith. Preserve our Protestant nation from the dangers which threaten it; from the united efforts of Popery, infidelity, and anarchy, which are now assuming an attitude of fearful aspect, resembling the three unclean spirits, like frogs, which St. John saw in vision to come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. O! that thy warning voice may be effectual in awakening our slumbering churches: "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame."*

It seems evident, both from prophecy and the signs of the times, that the millennial glory will be preceded by awful convulsions. The dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil, will not be chained, without a desperate, *permitted*, struggle. But this conflict with the Church of Christ will end in his confusion, and the Church's triumph. "The beast was taken, and with him the false prophet.....These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone."..... Then "an angel from heaven laid hold on the dragon, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit."†

The glorious predicted period will then dawn upon the world, like the sun shining without an intervening cloud. All will be holiness, happiness, and security. Yes! holiness shall become universal, and true piety enter into all the minutiæ of life. "The pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem, and in Judah, shall be Holiness unto the Lord of hosts;" even "upon the bells of the horses shall there be HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD."‡ Thus all the Lord's people, with all their powers and possessions, shall be consecrated to the glory of God. True religion will not be confined within the precincts of the temple, but extend

* Rev. xvi. 13—15. † Rev. xix. 20, 21, xx. 1—3.
‡ Zech. xiv. 20, 21.

itself through every habitation, and sanctify every occurrence and occupation.

This glory will be preceded by a wonderful outpouring of the Holy Spirit. For this we must constantly pray, in accordance with the *written word of God*. Whilst seeking after this blessing, saying, "Lord Jesus, come quickly; hasten thy work of glory," we must seek after *personal holiness*, that we may be ready to meet the Lord at his coming.

Great revivals in religion, and an extensive increase of it, have generally been a period of outward trouble. At such a time how often may it be said, "A man's foes are they of his own house."* Then, not unfrequently, have "the rulers set themselves against the Lord, and against his anointed."† So long as the sun shines, and the waters flow smoothly, the human mind is naturally satisfied with present things. It is when the sky lours, and the waves swell, that men's fears begin to operate, and to make them feel the uncertain nature of earthly things. Times of great trouble are not unfrequently employed as means for awakening men out of their death-like slumbers, and causing them to cry out with the trembling jailor, during the earthquake, "What must I do to be saved?"‡

Happy, indeed, when this is the case. We seem to be drawing near to some portentous crisis. The period seems to be fast approaching which will try men's principles of what sort they are. It will be a touchstone to try the faith of many, who now wear the garb of sanctity. The Lord is about to put His Church into the furnace, and when it is tried, it shall come out as gold. We have had a long season of outward ease. Profession has grown rank, but true piety, is still, as it ever was, a rare plant. It grows not in nature's soil. It is an exotic. Our defiling, chilling world, is little congenial to its growth; but He, who plants it in the *prepared* ground of the heart is Almighty: He waters it by

* Matt. x. 36. † Psa. ii. 2. ‡ Acts xvi. 30.

his Spirit, casts upon it the warm beams of His love, and renders it fruitful to His glory.

Oh! how soothing are the words of Christ: "Come unto me,.....and I will give you rest..... Come unto me,.....and ye shall find rest unto your souls."* The believer only can tell the blessedness of this invitation, and of the rest to which he is invited. It is a rest from guilty fears, from sinful desires, from vain pursuits. It is a rest in the love, faithfulness, and truth of Christ. It is a rest in his Atonement, Righteousness, and Intercession. It is a rest in his sovereignty, power, and willingness to save. It is a rest which yields to his soul comfort and peace. It is the foretaste of that Rest which remaineth to the people of God.

How comforting also are the words of Christ: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me."† O! that I had a heart to believe in Jesus, with the full assurance of faith. Then, like the Apostles of old, I might take up serpents, and they shall not hurt me. The keenest stings of slander, the most poisonous rancour of malice, endured for Christ's sake, shall no more harm me, than the viper did St. Paul, when it fastened on his hand at Melita.‡

"Let not your heart be troubled." Blessed words! On that memorable night, when the winds and the waves seemed ready to consign the infant Church of Christ to a watery grave, the disciples were filled with fear, and awoke their Master, exclaiming, "Carest thou not that we perish?" How majestic, how godlike, was the conduct of Jesus. He calmly arose, rebuked the wind and the sea, saying: "Peace, be still." And then, turning to his disciples, gently reproved them: "Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?"§

The winds of disorder are now beginning to roar; the waves of discord are now beginning to

* Matt. xi. 28, 29. † John xiv. 1. ‡ Acts xxviii. 3.
§ Mark iv. 38—40.

swell. The Church of Christ, like the ark of Noah, and the little vessel of the disciples, may be tossed on the tumultuous waters, but He who is with his Church is Almighty :—

"With Christ in the vessel,
We smile at the storm."

A heart under the influence of pride and passion, envy and jealousy, can never enjoy rest. Such a heart resembles the troubled sea, which casts up mire and dirt. How different is the heavenly rest. An angel's bosom is a stranger to conflicting passions. In that holy residence, dwells nothing that opposes the purposes of Jehovah, or disturbs the celestial harmony. There, all is obedience, purity, peace, and love. It is only in the breast of fallen man that rebellion is found, in conjunction with his tempters, the apostate spirits of darkness. The new creature in Christ Jesus is a restoration to pristine excellence. Much, indeed, still remains to be purged away; yet notwithstanding these remnants of corruption, the true believer is renewed in righteousness and true holiness.

O! happy change. O! blessed transformation. The work is inward and unseen, but its effects are visible; just as the sap which, rising unobserved by man, diffuses itself throughout the tree, producing leaves, and flowers, and fruit. How wonderful are the operations of the Holy Spirit on our hearts. Have I experienced their efficacy and blessedness? Has the Lord drawn me to himself by the cords of love? Has he manifested himself to me, as he does not unto the world? Am I a follower of them who, through faith and patience, are inheriting the promises; dwelling in the smiles of the Redeemer, and enjoying a sabbath of eternal rest?

Jesus, the ever-adorable Jesus, is the fountain of this felicity. His precious blood is the purchase-price of our redemption. The claims of justice are satisfied, and mercy encompasseth the believer as with

a shield. Streams of undeserved blessings are continually descending upon him from the throne of God and of the Lamb, filling his heart with joy and peace.

Whatever holiness we possess, whatever peace we enjoy, all must be traced to Jesus, the purchaser and bestower of every good and perfect gift. All the spices of Arabia cannot equal in sweetness the fragrance of his sacred name. It is as ointment poured forth. It is a balm for every wound. All that we can conceive of excellence and beauty, of glory and perfection, is to be found in Jesus, who is the chief among ten thousand, the altogether lovely. He is the Believer's Rest.

"Dear Friend of friendless sinners hear,
And magnify thy grace divine;
Pardon a worm that would draw near,
That would his heart to thee resign:
A worm, by self and sin oppress'd,
That pants to reach the promis'd Rest.

"With holy fear, and reverend love,
I long to be beneath thy throne;
I long in Thee to live and move,
And charge myself on Thee alone.
Teach me to lean upon thy breast,
To find in Thee, the promis'd Rest.

"Thou say'st, thou wilt thy servants keep
In perfect peace, whose minds shall be
Like new-born babes, or helpless sheep,
Completely stay'd, dear Lord, on Thee.
How calm their state, how truly bless'd,
Who trust on Thee, the promis'd Rest.

"Take me, my Saviour, as thine own,
And vindicate my righteous cause;
Be Thou my portion, Lord, alone,
And bend me to obey thy laws;
In thy dear arms of love caress'd,
Give me to find thy promis'd Rest.

"Bid the tempestuous rage of sin,
With all its wrathful fury die:
Let the Redeemer dwell within;
And turn my sorrow into joy.
O! may my heart, by Thee possess'd,
Know Thee to be my promis'd Rest."

XLVIII.—THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD.

"My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."—Isa. xlvi. 10.

NOTHING is so composing to the Christian pilgrim, as the assurance of divine guidance in every, even the minutest circumstances which befall him. Without this perception of his heavenly Father's care, a thousand intricacies must beset his path. He must be staggered at almost every step. But when he beholds, by faith, the unerring hand of infinite wisdom, wielding the stupendous machine of human events, and causing every thing to promote the spiritual good of his people; then he quiets himself as a little child, and can say with cheerful resignation: "Father,.....not my will, but thine be done."* Like the cabin-boy during the storm, he is kept in peace, while all is terror around him; and if asked why? his reply is that of the artless boy: "Because my father is at the helm."

In such a world of change and trial, how inestimable is a calm reliance on the wisdom, power, and love of God. It fully compensates for the want of temporal ease and wealth. While destitute of this holy frame, riches is poverty, and honour an empty sound. That man is poor indeed, though surrounded with affluence, whose heart is a stranger to the blessings of true religion.

Lord be pleased to impart unto me, thy unworthy servant, this spirit of confidence in thee. May I see

* Luke xxii. 42.

thy hand in all the events of life; ordering the bounds of my habitation, and the duration of my earthly pilgrimage. May I recognise thy hand in the less as well as in the greater movements of thy Providence. This watching and waiting for the manifestations of thy guardian care, will fill me with thankfulness for all my mercies, and make me patient under all my trials. O! for more faith, humility, and hope. Pour out of thy fulness these heavenly blessings, that my soul may daily ripen for the enjoyment of the Paradise above.

If, without our heavenly Father not a sparrow falls; if the very hairs of our head are all numbered,* how composed should we be. We have nothing to fear but sin. While acting faith upon the promises, we have every thing to hope for; yea, every thing to enjoy. The reins of universal nature are in the hands of Infinite Love. The vast complex machine is guided by Infinite Wisdom and Power. The Almighty Ruler of the sky cannot be taken by surprise. Nothing unforeseen can happen to cross his purposes or thwart his designs. All worlds are open to his view. All hearts lie naked before him. All the busy thoughts of men, with all their multiplied perplexities, ever in restless motion, are to him distinctly known. He knows every motive, the germ of every action. Thoughts deeply buried in the heart, are clearly recognised by his all-searching eye. By him actions are weighed. He trieth the spirits. He searcheth the reins and the heart, that, as the RIGHTEOUS JUDGE of all, he may render unto every man according to his work. Nothing is too great for his power, nothing too secret for his omniscience. Hence he could declare, that "Every imagination of the thoughts," remarkable expression; every outline, or sketch, or first formation of the thoughts, is "only evil continually."† And again: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can

* Matt. x. 29, 30.; Luke xii. 6, 7.

† Gen. vi. 5.

know it? I the Lord search the heart. I try the reins."*

If this Great and Glorious Being be our Father and our Friend, through his own sovereign grace, enabling us to believe in his beloved Son; then our privilege is to rejoice at all times, and in every thing to give thanks.

Are we tried? We may be sure that there is a needs-be for it, that it is sent in love, and that the whole process of affliction is under the direction of a loving Father. This assurance, if truly felt in the heart, will cause the soul to fall with childlike acquiescence, into the hand of God. This David felt when he said, under a perplexing choice, "Let us fall into the hand of the Lord, (for his mercies are great,) and let me not fall into the hand of man."† It will still the rising murmurs of impatient nature, and mould our will into a conformity to the will of God. O! blessed Lord, how much, how very much, do I need this simple, humble, submission of the heart to Thee.

While journeying heavenward, we are called to the exercise of faith and patience. The children of Israel had much of this lesson to learn in the wilderness. Their history is indeed instructive.

"At the commandment of the Lord they journeyed, and at the commandment of the Lord they pitched: as long as the cloud abode upon the tabernacle, they rested in their tents.....Whether it were two days, or a month, or a year, that the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, remaining thereon, the children of Israel abode in their tents, and journeyed not: but when it was taken up, they journeyed."‡

Thus, it is evident that the Israelites were not to exercise their own will. They were to wait for, and to follow the will of God, as manifested to them by the resting and moving of the cloud. This subjugation of our will to the will of God is contrary to our natural independence and hastiness of spirit.

* Jer. xvii. 9, 10. † 2 Sam. xxiv. 14.; 1 Chron. xxi. 13.
‡ Numb. ix. 18—23.

We want to be moving, when God would have us rest; and we wish to remain, when he bids us to depart. Truly our heavenly Father has to bear with wayward children.

Though we have not, like the Israelites, a *visible token* of the divine will respecting our earthly movements; yet we must watch the movements of his Providence, and pray to be directed by his Sovereign Will. How many precious promises are scattered throughout his word to encourage our faith and hope, our patience and reliance, on the divine guidance and care.

"I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye."* "This God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death."† "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee."‡ "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."§ "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."‖

"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth,"** were the words of Christ to his Apostles, before he ascended to the throne of his glory. How consoling and encouraging is the assurance that the blessed Redeemer of my soul is the Great Sovereign of the Universe. Without his permission nothing can happen in the vast dominion over which he sways his sceptre. To his will every creature must bow, either in willing obedience or in just and endless punishment.

When I survey the earth on which I live, and contemplate the millions of human beings which cover its surface, what an imposing scene presents itself before me.

Each, amongst these millions, is occupied with his own individual concerns, whilst the Lord of the creation watches over the concerns of *all* his creatures.

* Psa. xxxii. 8. † Psa. xlviii. 14. ‡ Psa. lv. 22.
§ 1 Pet. v. 7. ‖ Prov. iii. 6. ** Matt. xxviii. 18.

Each is planning schemes of future happiness, whilst the Lord may be preparing events for *future trials*.

Each is losing the *present* opportunity in the *future* prospect; building for to-morrow, and depriving himself of the benefit of to-day, when the sentence may have gone forth: "Thou fool! *this night* thy soul shall be required of thee."*

Felix thus put off the favoured period for seeking repentance; trembling under the terrors of a judgment to come, he said to his intrepid prisoner: "Go thy way *for this time;* when I have a *convenient season*, I will call for thee."† This convenient season never returned,—a season for breaking off his sins by repentance.

It is dangerous to resist the motions of the Spirit. What we feel to-day, if slighted, may never revisit us more. "My Spirit shall not *always* strive with man."‡ "Ephraim is joined to idols: *let him alone.*"§ "Because I have called, and ye refused,.....I will mock when your fear cometh."‖ The Sovereign Jehovah speaks as a sovereign: "I will have mercy on whom I *will* have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I *will* have compassion."** He "worketh all things after the counsel of his own WILL."††

Among the busy tribes of men, a thousand arts are employed to gain their purpose, either for ambition, gain, or pleasure. Hence all the corrupt affections and passions of the depraved heart are brought into continual exercise; spreading misery and confusion, bloodshed and distress, over every part of the habitable globe.

In the midst of all these schemes for aggrandisement, or pleasure, the Almighty Sovereign is forgotten; his will is neglected, his laws are broken, his threatenings are slighted, his mercy is despised,

* Luke xii. 20. † Acts xxiv. 25. ‡ Gen. vi. 3.
§ Hosea iv. 17. ‖ Prov. i. 24—26. ** Rom. ix. 15.
†† Eph. i. 11.

his power is dared by open rebellion, and infidel attacks upon his Majesty and Glory.

In the midst of this universal degeneracy, the Great Sovereign displays his dreadful judgments, by deluging a world of rebels,—burning up wicked and polluted cities,—pouring plagues of desolating varieties upon a persecuting kingdom,—destroying entire nations of vile and abominable offenders,—punishing his own professing people with multiplied and varied judgments,—chastising individuals in their persons, property, and families,—permitting wars to waste, and pestilences to desolate, the regions of the earth. And all this on account of SIN.

These, and a thousand other evils receive their commission from that Almighty Ruler of heaven and earth, whose Power none can withstand, whose Counsel none can defeat, whose Will none can thwart. And yet, rebellious man dares to lift his puny arm against Omnipotence, as if he could command events, and make the future to crown his wishes.

Those who have perused with attention the pages of history, or studied the page of their own experience, must have learned how little human wisdom can depend upon its own foresight, or human power upon its own achievement. The fairest plans are often blasted, when nearest their accomplishment. And many, who, with labouring steps have reached the summit of their expectations, have been hurled from their eminence, just when stretching out the hand to grasp the golden prize. Well may we exclaim with Solomon: "Vanity of vanities;.....all is vanity."* Haman, in the Book of Esther, affords a striking instance. He erected a gallows—for himself!†

"Be still, and know that I am God,"‡ is the soothing accent of mercy to the believers in Jesus. If we know God in all his adorable perfections, in the greatness of his power, and in the fulness of his love, as manifested in the gift of his Son, we shall be

* Eccles. xii. 8. † Esther vi. & vii. 10.
‡ Psa. xlvi. 10.

still, calm, and composed, amidst the agitations of a restless world.

When the judgments of God are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.* O! my soul, look now unto thy God. Dark, indeed, is the cloud which covers our political horizon, and fearful the storm which is ready to burst upon our favoured island. Popery, Infidelity, and Anarchy are forming a mine which may involve thousands in ruin. Our national sins are great, and so are our national mercies. This aggravates our ingratitude and increases our guilt. The divine bow is bent, the arrow is on the string, ready to fly in vengeance, and what withholds it? the arm of mercy, the intercession of Jesus.

O! my soul, forget not that thy sins form a part of the nation's guilt; sins, as numerous as the stars of heaven. How inconceivable, then, must be the sum of human guilt, when multiplied by millions of men in succeeding generations, all born in sin, all living in iniquity, till renewed by the Spirit of grace? Surely nothing can so strikingly display the forbearance of God. This David felt when he sang:—"God is strong and patient: and God is provoked every day."† Lord impart unto me, thy very sinful creature, the grace of true repentance. Give me an unfeigned abhorrence of all sin, and an entire cleaving of my heart to thee. O! do thou mercifully withhold our deserved judgments, and pour out upon us a flood of undeserved mercy. For the sake of thy beloved Son, hear the supplications of thy people, who would now approach thy mercy-seat with deep humiliation. Be thou, O Lord, entreated for our land, and pity thy people. We are, indeed, O Lord, a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children which are corrupters. But, oh! pour out upon us a spirit of true repentance, faith, and love. Give not thy heritage to reproach. Thou art righteous, and we are wicked. Thy rod is

* Isa. xxvi. 9. † Psa. vii. 12.—Prayer Book Version.

the rod of judgment; but O! let it become a sceptre of mercy, ruling our hearts by love. Draw all hearts to thyself, subdue every rebellious will. Great, indeed, and frightful is the iniquity which aboundeth. Thy holy word is blasphemed; thy Gospel is rejected; thy beloved Son is disowned; and what will the end be? I hear thee say: "Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?"*

Lord! may I and mine be safe under thy feathers; shielded by thy power; and comforted by thy love. Whatever storms may blow upon our land, be thou to us "as a little sanctuary,"† a place of refuge, a tower of strength. Spread thy wing over us, till the storm be overpast. But should it be thy will, that any of us should fall under the devouring sword, still may we be safely lodged in thy arms; and, like Elijah, be carried from the discords of earth to the harmonies of heaven.

How soothing in this world of woe,
Where tempests rage, and wild winds blow,
To know that He who guides the storm
Is God in Christ—in human form;
All power to Jesus Christ is given,
O'er all on earth, and all in heaven:
He can create a storm at will;
Or speak the word—and all is still!

The rolling orbs obey his law
As round the sun their paths they draw;
The little insect of an hour,
Obeys the same Almighty Power.
The stony heart his word can break;
His grace support the poor and meek;
Ah! who can all his wonders tell?
Our Jesus, He does all things well.

My soul! repose beneath the wing
Of Israel's Shepherd, Lord, and King,
No harm can reach thee, shelter'd there,
While safe beneath the Shepherd's care.

* Jer. v. 9, 29., ix. 9. † Ezek. xi. 16.

But, shouldst thou see th' uplifted rod,
Be still and know that Christ is God:
The cloud which guilty sinners dread,
"Shall break in blessings on thy head."

Yet, shouldst thou feel his chast'ning hand,
Which sweeps across a sinful land,
Still all is *sanctified* to thee,
If thou the friend of Jesus be.—
Soon will the mighty Judge descend,
The trumpet sound—and time shall end.
His Wrath, each foe, shall then destroy;
His Love, each saint, receive with joy.

XLIX.—ON THE SOVEREIGNTY OF DIVINE GRACE.

"The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law."—Deut. xxix. 29.

"I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."—Acts xx. 27.

Humility, faith, and prayer, through the operation of the Holy Ghost, are essential to the right reception of divine Truth. A peculiar state of heart, rather than much strength of intellect, is required in order to comprehend the gospel. Its sublime truths, though hid from the wise and prudent, are revealed unto babes: "The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way."* "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant."† "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."‡

The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. Thousands have been led astray by "philosophy and vain deceit,"§ by "science falsely so called."‖

* Psa. xxv. ix. † Psa. xxv. 14. ‡ John vii. 17.
§ Col. ii. 8. ‖ 1 Tim. vi. 20.

The pride of human reason has ever opposed the humiliating revelations of the Spirit. The fall of man and its direful consequences on the human race; —the redemption of sinners, through the incarnation and death of Jesus Christ the Son of God;—the regeneration of the soul, through the power of the Holy Ghost;—the sovereignty of God in the bestowment of his gifts, having mercy on whom he will have mercy;—the utter inability of man to save himself; and his everlasting obligations to the free grace of God, through the merits and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ, are subjects which fill heaven with praise, and the volumes of the philosophical sceptic with doubts and ridicule!

The unhumbled heart, ever rises against the doctrine of the Sovereignty of Divine Grace. Man is naturally self-righteous. He seeks to find *in himself* the meritorious cause of his future hoped-for felicity. Heaven is an object of his desire, because it is a place of rest; not because it is a state of *holiness*. The man of the world understands neither the nature of heavenly bliss, nor the way to attain it. Being a professing member of the Christian Church, he observes her ceremonies, and practises some moral duties. On these he rests his hopes of heaven. As pain and hell are united together, he naturally shrinks from the idea of torment; and yet, he lives in *sin*, the very road which leads into the fiery gulf! So blind, so inconsistent is fallen man!

In treating on the great doctrine of Election, one of the fruits of sovereign grace, much controversy and angry disputes have been carried on between different sections of the Christian Church; some almost excommunicating and anathematising those who differ from them. But "Wisdom is justified of all her children."*

The true believer, who is "clothed with humility;"† whose heart is as a weaned child; weaned from the pride of intellect, from the trammels of

* Luke vii. 35. † 1 Pet. v. 5.

human systems, from a vainglorious display of theological attainments, will receive with meekness all that the Lord reveals. He may, indeed, when contemplating the mysteries of grace, be led to exclaim with Nicodemus, "How can these things be?"* Or with Paul, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"† but the declaration: "THUS SAITH THE LORD," ever satisfies his mind. This *sacred seal*, placed upon the most abstruse revelations of the mind of God, is quite sufficient. He wants no more. And what is the result? —He enjoys the peace of God; the sweet assurance of his love; the hope of glory, through the atoning blood of Christ.

It is then at our peril, if we add unto, or diminish ought from, the word of God. As there were "Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life:"‡ so, lest the unhallowed hands of reasoning pride should mutilate or encumber the Scriptures of Truth, they are guarded, both by a command and a threatening: "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you."§ "If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."‖

"Dangerous it were for the feeble brain of man to wade far into the doings of the Most High; whom although to know be life, and joy to make mention of his name; yet our soundest knowledge is, to know that we know him not as indeed he is, neither can know him; and our safest eloquence concerning him, is our silence, when we confess without confession, that his glory is inexplicable, his greatness above our capacity and reach. He is above, and we upon earth;

* John iii. 9. † Rom. xi. 33. ‡ Gen. iii. 24.
§ Deut. iv. 2. ‖ Rev. xxii. 19.

therefore it behoveth our words to be wary and few."*

The humble believer, who is taught of God, will receive the mysteries of the kingdom, as the Spirit has been pleased to reveal them; and instead of endeavouring to explain them by his finite capacity, will rest satisfied with the divine assurance: "What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter."† This composed the mind of the inspired Paul: "Now we see through a glass darkly; but *then* face to face: now I know in part; but *then* shall I know even as also I am known."‡

We should never meditate upon the doctrine of Election, but with the profoundest reverence, humility, and child-like dependence on the teaching of the Holy Ghost. We know nothing of this mysterious Truth but by the Scriptures. It is therefore the safest way to receive it, just as it is recorded, without endeavouring to supply, by our shallow comprehension, what Infinite Wisdom has thought fit to conceal.

From all eternity, God saw the end from the beginning. There is no before or after to the divine mind; it is one *eternal present*. Nothing new, nothing unforeseen, or unknown, can happen to that Omniscient Jehovah, who made all things, and by whom all things consist.

"Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world."§ To this fundamental truth, declared by St. James, every orthodox Christian must subscribe. He, who inhabiteth eternity; He, who filleth heaven and earth with his presence; He, in whom we live, and move, and have our being; He, who knoweth all the secrets of the heart, and beholdeth all the ways of the children of men, cannot be taken by surprise, or thwarted in his purposes and plans. If this fundamental truth be granted, then it must necessarily follow, that God *foresaw* the fall of our first parents, and *fore-ordained*

* Hooker. † John xiii. 7. ‡ 1 Cor. xiii. 12. § Acts xv. 18.

his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ, as God manifest in the flesh, to become the Saviour of our fallen race. The sin of Adam was his own. It sprang from a wilful disobedience to the divine command. Justice pronounced the sentence of death on the guilty pair; but mercy proclaimed pardon through the seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent's head. How inconceivably great are the riches of sovereign grace. This was a redemption as unexpected, as it was unsought. Truly, mercy rejoiced against judgment. The Almighty declared himself to be a just God, and yet a Saviour. His own arm brought salvation.

From Genesis to the Revelation, salvation is revealed as the free unmerited work of God. The Fountain of Grace is in Himself:—The copious streams flow down to us through Jesus Christ, and all our services ascend with acceptance only by, and through Him. We "are not redeemed with corruptible things,.....but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was *fore-ordained before the foundation of the world.*"* And true believers are said to have their names "written in the book of life of the *Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*"†

St. Paul broke out into an anthem of praise on this account: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him *before the foundation of the world*, that we should be *holy* and without blame before him in love."‡ He told the Roman converts that, whom God "did *foreknow*, he also did *predestinate* to be *conformed to the image of his Son*, that he might be the first-born among many brethren."§ And to the Thessalonians he said: "We are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren..... because God hath *from the beginning chosen you to salvation* through sanctification of the Spirit and

* 1 Pet. i. 18—20. † Rev. xiii. 8. ‡ Eph. i. 3, 4.
§ Rom. viii. 29.

belief of the truth."* To Timothy, his beloved son in the faith, St. Paul thus writes: "Be not thou *ashamed* of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was *given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began;* but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."† To Titus, his "own son after the common faith,"‡ the Apostle expresses his view of the divine sovereignty: "Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of *God's elect*, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised *before the world began;* but hath in due times manifested his word through preaching."§

St. Peter also addressed the strangers scattered abroad by the rude hand of persecution, as "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."‖

If we receive these inspired declarations, which contain the will of God respecting his redeemed people, in their plain *grammatical* meaning, apart from prejudice and unwarped by system, surely we cannot fail to acknowledge the sovereignty of God in his acts of grace.

But alas! the pride of fallen reason rises against the sovereignty of Jehovah. The natural heart cannot stoop so low, as to accept of salvation through the righteousness of another, and irrespective of any *foreseen* goodness in the recipient. But, however wretched man may oppose the freeness of divine grace, the Apostles declare, in unequivocal language, that

* 2 Thes. ii. 13. † 2 Tim. i. 8—10. ‡ Tit. i. 4.
§ Tit. i. 1—3. ‖ 1 Pet. i. 2.

God in Christ is the Author of Salvation; that his gifts are *sovereign*, flowing from everlasting to everlasting; that he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, to the praise of the glory of his grace. He is debtor to none, "for *all* have sinned, and come short of his glory;"* all, therefore, *deserve* to perish. If any are saved, it is not through any righteousness of their own, "for there is none righteous, no, not one,"† but through the unspeakable love of God. None can claim salvation as a *right;* all may, and must sue for it, as an unmerited gift. None who seek for it through the merits of Christ, with earnest prayer, and by humble faith, shall be rejected. The promise is full and clear: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."‡ Humility will embrace this great salvation; when pride expires at the foot of the Cross.

Our destruction is altogether from ourselves. The Omniscient Jehovah foresaw the issue of Satan's temptation, and in his inscrutable wisdom *permitted* man to fall, but in doing so, he remained the same holy and good Being, and can be in no wise chargeable with his creature's transgression. To believe otherwise would be blasphemy in the extreme.§

Man was created a rational being, a free agent. When he eat of the forbidden fruit he did it with the consent of his own will. Satan could not *force* our first parents to eat. The act was their own. He presented the alluring bait; he proposed specious arguments; he threw in doubtful insinuations respecting the divine prohibition; the poison operated, the temptation succeeded, and they fell through yielding to Satan's infidel suggestions. They disbelieved the words of their Creator, and fell from the heights of holiness and happiness, into the depths of sin and woe! As a child partakes of the nature of the parent, so, when Adam fell, all his posterity fell in him. He became the head of a fallen race. Original

* Rom. iii. 23. † Psa. xiv. 1—3., liii. 1—3.; Rom. iii. 10—12.
‡ Acts xvi. 31. § Eccles. vii. 29.

sin having tainted the fountain, it embittered and polluted all the streams. "In Adam all die."*

Human pride revolts at this humiliating truth, though it form the basis upon which redemption rests. The glorious doctrines of grace, like the rainbow, shine the brightest in the darkest cloud. All, then, are sinners without exception. The violated Law of God condemns the whole human race. Hence it follows, that by the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified. Where, then, is salvation to be found? Only in and through the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word. As we are lost under the covenant of works, so we can only be saved under the covenant of grace.

Will, then, the whole human race be saved? The Scriptures tell us, that none, *to whom the gospel is preached*, will be saved, but those who truly believe in Jesus; who receive him into their heart by faith and love; who mourn over and forsake their sins; and who bring forth the fruits of the Spirit in all goodness, righteousness, and truth. With respect to the Heathen, who have never heard the gospel, nor enjoyed the means of hearing of a Saviour's love, the Judge of all the earth will do right.

The carnal mind is enmity against God. With a darkened understanding, a rebellious will, and corrupt affections, the natural man, like Naaman, turns away in a rage from the simple, but efficacious remedy of God's providing.—(See 2 Kings v.)

Every man, woman, and child, in every age, would thus reject Christ and his great salvation, if God did not, in his rich mercy, incline the hearts of some to embrace Jesus as their only Saviour. If left to ourselves, *we should never come* to Christ.† And so powerful is this corrupt bent of the will to evil, that *we never could come* to Him, if God did not make us willing in the day of his power, if he did not draw us by the secret but constraining influences of his Holy Spirit.‡

* 1 Cor. xv. 22. † John v. 40. ‡ John vi. 44, 65.

The God of all grace does not force us to come to Christ against our will; but he sets before us our lost condition by nature, the hatefulness of sin, and all its direful consequences; the suitableness of Christ to all our wants; his loveliness and preciousness in all his offices and characters; the beauty of holiness, and the bliss of heaven; and then, by an all-illuminating and attractive energy, he convinces and captivates our minds to embrace freely and fully, Jesus Christ, as all our salvation, and all our desire. "By grace are ye saved,"* was the delightful theme of St. Paul.

Such a soul, thus choosing Christ as its portion, is a vessel of mercy, "sanctified, and made meet for the master's use, and prepared *unto every good work*."† Such a soul is declared in Scripture to be "*chosen in*" *Christ* "*before the foundation of the world*;"‡ for wherever the doctrine of election is mentioned, it is invariably connected with *holiness*. These holy souls, transformed by divine grace into the image of Christ, form, collectively, the *true* Church, the body of Christ, of which he is the head; the spouse to whom he is the husband. They are called the people of God,—the children of God,—the heirs of God. They are admitted to a delightful fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. They are the temples of the Holy Ghost; the habitation of God through the Spirit. They are the wheat among the tares; the good fishes among the bad; the wise among the foolish virgins; the fruitful among the unfruitful branches, as declared by our Lord in his parabolical descriptions of the *visible* Church, in which the good and the evil mingle together until the day of final separation, when the people prepared by the Lord, shall for ever inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world.§

How monstrous, then, are the objections made by some persons to this doctrine of grace, who assert

* Eph. ii. 5, 8. † 2 Tim. ii. 21. ‡ Eph. i. 4.
§ Matt. xxv. 34.

that if any one be elected he will be saved, how *unholy soever* his life may be.

As the Bible is designed for the instruction of all mankind, so all may read their *character* in that sacred volume. The whole human race is divided into two great classes, believers and unbelievers, saints and sinners, the righteous and the wicked; those who serve God, and those who serve him not. In one or other of these distinctive classes will all be ranged at the judgment day, when Christ will separate the righteous from the wicked, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.*

To each of these two broadly defined characters, the blessing and the curse; the promise and the threatening, is made. Hence it is said: "He that *believeth*, and is baptised, shall be saved; but he that *believeth not*, shall be damned."† The wicked "shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."‡

Should any one, through divine grace, become a believer in Jesus, he changes his state before God, he becomes entitled, through the merits of Christ, to the blessing and the promise; is made a member of Christ's mystical body; and thus, by the work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope, evidences his election of God.

The way and means for the salvation of sinners, was fore-ordained: even the incarnation, sufferings, death, and glorification of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; as also our sanctification through the gift and power of the Holy Ghost.

Faith is likewise the divinely-appointed instrument, by which the sinner is enabled to lay hold on Christ as his Saviour and Advocate with the Father; and the moment any one is empowered through grace to believe from the heart in the Lord Jesus Christ, as revealed and set forth in the Scriptures, he passes from death unto life, is adopted into the family of God, becomes a member of the Church militant, reads

* Matt. xxv. 32. † Mark xvi. 16. ‡ Matt. xxv. 46.

his title to glory in the work of Christ, and, through the sanctifying grace of the Spirit, progressively advancing in his soul, makes his calling and election sure.

This exalted blessing is not in Scripture offered to a few: no! blessed be God, the offers of salvation are made alike *to all;* the invitation is general, the command to preach the gospel is unlimited; "Go ye into *all the world*, and preach the gospel to *every creature.*"* None are excluded, but such as through unbelief exclude themselves. The destruction of sinners is the fruit of their own voluntary choice; the free act of their own rebellious wills, in opposition to the sweetest calls of mercy, the gracious strivings of the Spirit, the powerful checks of conscience, the solemn alarms of Providence, and the recorded threatenings of Scripture. Thus man is the author of his own misery, and wilfully adjudges himself unworthy of eternal life. Whatever excuses men may now make for their sins, a day is coming, a day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, when he will render to every man according to his deeds. Then will every unbeliever, every unconverted sinner, like the man without the wedding garment, stand speechless and self-condemned before the Judge of quick and dead; while all the happy members of Christ's family, his Church redeemed from the earth, shall appear before him without "spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing,"† giving to God the glory of their salvation, and praising and adoring the Lamb that was slain; who washed them from their sins in his own blood, and made them kings and priests unto God.

The Scriptures of truth, and the preaching of the Gospel, are the two great instruments in the hands of the Spirit for enlightening the world and turning sinners from the power of Satan unto God. It is, therefore, our duty, as it is our privilege, to sit under a faithful ministry, and to read the word of God

* Mark xvi. 15. † Eph. v. 27.

with earnest prayer, that the promised blessing may accompany the means.

The Spirit always addresses us *by the word*, and treats us as rational creatures; therefore, we are proper subjects for invitations, warnings, cautions, directions, &c. To enter into the niceties of controversy tends to confuse the mind, not to edify it. The way of salvation is plain and clear. The mode of effecting it is far beyond our conception. The incarnation of the Eternal Word, and the secret operations of the Holy Ghost on the human soul, are subjects which will for ever occupy the meditations of the spirits of just men made perfect in heaven. Here "we see through a glass darkly,"* and yet, quite clear enough to condemn us, if we miss the heavenly road. What we want is a humble, childlike spirit, to receive the great truths of the Gospel as PRACTICAL TRUTHS, which are revealed, not to make us disputers, but disciples of Jesus Christ, to restore us to the love and favour of God through faith in his blood; and to a holy conformity to that divine image which we lost by the Fall. This is the new birth, the new creation, that transformation which passes upon every soul before it can be admitted into the Paradise above.

It is of great spiritual importance that we consider all the doctrines of the Gospel in this *practical* view. They were not given us as subjects for speculation, but as most precious truths, on the right embracing of which our everlasting salvation depends. What will it avail, that I fancy myself to be one of the *elect* of God, if I am destitute of their character as pourtrayed in the Holy Scriptures? We are told, and painful experience teaches us, that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."† This heart must be changed by divine grace, before we can have any scriptural hope of enjoying heaven; and if our hearts are changed, it will be effected by the grace and power of Christ, who is the author and finisher of our faith, the giver of true repentance,

* 1 Cor. xiii. 12. † Jer. xvii. 9.

and the fountain of all spiritual blessings, which he sheds abundantly on every contrite heart.

The doctrine of Election, as revealed in the word of God, is very sweet to humble holy souls, in an hour of darkness or affliction; whereby they are enabled to trust in the Lord, and to stay themselves upon their God. But it is dangerous for carnal persons, lacking the Spirit of God; for they convert the children's bread into *poison*, and thus, to them, the word of life becomes the savour of death unto death.

Let us, then, seek for those graces which are the undeniable evidences of saving faith, and the indisputable marks of the elect of God. These the Apostle mentions: "Put on, as the *elect of God*, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."*

Happy, indeed, are they who can read their own character, in some humble measure, in this concise description of true believers. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they," and they only, "are the Sons of God;"† for, "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."‡

O! all-gracious Father, whose love and power are infinite, enable me, while a sojourner on mercy's ground, to seek thee where alone thou canst be found, in Christ my Saviour. Stretch forth thine arm, and save me from sinking beneath the waves of destruction. Draw me to thy mercy-seat. Speak peace to my soul. Destroy all evil in my heart. Fill me with light and love; with all the fruits of the Spirit. Unite me to the Saviour by a living faith. Make me a member of thy true Church, that, being chosen in Christ through thy sovereign grace, I may glorify thee here, by a life of holiness, and then at death

* Col. iii. 12—14. † Rom. viii. 14. ‡ Rom. viii. 9.

njoy a life of happiness in thy blissful presence, here is fulness of joy; and at thy right hand, where re pleasures for evermore.

How can the world true bliss bestow,
Where thorny cares and sorrows grow?
On Christ alone, my hope is laid,
Whose love the great Atonement made.
His blood can peace and joy procure,
His faithful word is ever sure.

If Satan comes in evil hour,
Jesus helps me by his Power;
He, by his Cross, the foe subdues,
While faith, the bleeding Saviour views.
Through Him, my soul each foe defies,
And happy in his grace relies.

If I forsake the living way,
And careless from my Saviour stray;
An awful gloom is soon o'erspread,
For Jesus to my heart hath said:
"Did I expire upon the tree
That thou the friend of sin shouldst be?"

A pilgrim here, I often sigh,
O'erwhelmed with grief and misery:
I then exclaim: "no light I see,
My Jesus hath forgotten me."
But still my Lord does pity take,
Though earthly parents should forsake.

To this dear Friend I will repair,
Whose love can all my burdens bear;
His grace can cheer affliction's hour,
His Spirit give the strengthening power.
Oh! till he come from heaven above,
May I abide in Jesu's love.

L.—THE UNSATISFYING NATURE OF EARTHLY THINGS, AND THE BENEFIT OF SANCTIFIED AFFLICTION.

"Behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit."—Eccles. ii. 11.

"No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."—Heb. xii. 11.

St. Paul was in a happy frame when he could say: "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."*

Wealth breeds care. One staff is a help to the weary traveller; a hundred would press him down. There is much wisdom as well as mercy in the precept: "Let your moderation be known unto all men: .....Be careful for nothing"† Superfluity often creates satiety. The man who lives continually in the midst of splendour, views with indifference those costly objects which attract the admiration of strangers. Solomon withheld his heart from no joy, but the fruit of all his toil was, "vanity and vexation of spirit."‡

The blessings of Providence are more evenly dealt out than is supposed. There are temptations and trials peculiar to every condition of life. St. James calls our attention to his important question: "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?"§ And St. Paul, in like manner, addresses the Corinthians: "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are

* Phil. iv. 11. † Phil. iv. 5, 6. ‡ Eccles. i. 14., ii. 11, 17.
§ James ii. 5.

despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence."* For "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things do I delight, saith the Lord."†

O! my soul, earth and heaven are spread before thee. Each are inviting thee to closer union. God and Mammon are demanding thy service; but *both* thou canst not serve.‡ Choose this day whom thou wilt serve, God or the world. Thou hast seen that, when the world has poured its envied greatness upon any individual, he is still every moment liable to the sorrows of the heart, to the diseases of the body, to the stroke of death; and, if unregenerate, to the worm that dieth not, and to the fire that never shall be quenched.§ Thy powers are vast, though weakened and corrupted through the Fall.‖ Allied to angels by thy spiritual nature, thou art ever soaring beyond the boundaries of time, and longing for a *something* yet unpossessed, a happiness which earth can never give.** This restless search for happiness shows thee, O my soul, that He who formed thee, made thee for a holier, happier state than this. When the world has lavished on thee all its bliss, the aching void still remains. God alone can satisfy those enlarged desires which stretch themselves into immortality.

Be wise, then, O my soul, look unto that glorious Being who inhabiteth eternity, who is the fountain of all blessedness, the only source of true, unmixed felicity. Behold him in the person of Jesus Christ;

* 1 Cor. i. 26—29. † Jer. ix. 23, 24.

‡ Matt. xvi. 11.; Luke xvi. 13. § Mark ix. 43—48.

‖ Job xiv. 4.; Psa. li. 5.; John iii. 6.; 1 Cor. ii. 14.

** Psa. viii. 5., Heb. ii. 7.; Eccles. v. 16., Mark viii. 36.

behold, believe, and love! This gracious Emmanuel left the mansions of glory to save thee from the abodes of misery. He became poor, that thou, through his poverty, mightest be rich.* O! tear thy affections from these transient scenes, and fix them upon Him who loved thee even unto death. Make him thy choice; thy portion; thy everlasting all. He can make poverty, abundance; and abundance, satisfying: for with him thou shalt have all things and abound. With him is treasured up all bliss and glory; all happiness and felicity; all joy and peace; every delight, and every precious thing.

Come, thou blessed Redeemer, Saviour of sinners, Friend of the lost and wretched, be thou my present and eternal portion. O! make me willing to choose thee, and to love thee, and to serve thee with all my powers. Take full possession of my heart. Enter, heavenly guest, and take up thine abode within me. Wash me from all my sins in thy cleansing blood. Clothe me with the spotless garment of thy Righteousness. Fill me with the grace of thy Spirit; and enable me to live to thee alone; to seek my all in thee; to devote my every power to thee; to commit myself, body, soul, and spirit, into thy hands, to be sanctified, governed, and preserved through thy grace, to the glory of thy holy name.

Nothing is more common than to approve of what is good, and yet to follow that which is evil. Few, comparatively, are faithful to their convictions. None can deny the uncertainty of life, and yet all live as if life were at their command. Schemes of future bliss are devised with as much security, as if the fond projectors were building their fabric on a rock. But soon the illusion vanishes like the Mirage of the desert, which leaves the disappointed traveller, when advancing as he hoped towards some refreshing waters, with nothing but the burning sand.

Every thing here below is fleeting and transitory. While journeying through this wilderness of care,

* 2 Cor. viii. 9.

few verdant spots are to be found, on which the weary traveller can repose. The earth lies under the curse. Thorns and thistles cover the ground. Storms and tempests agitate the air. Disease and death dissolve the dearest ties; yet, in the midst of all this fluctuation, the heart of fallen man would never seek its rest in an Unchangeable Saviour, did not the sovereignty of grace reveal the blessing, and make the sinner willing to repose under the shadow of his wing.

Every thing around me bespeaks the Fall, and testifies that this is not my rest. Why, then, should my foolish heart repose itself on any creature comfort? Have I still to learn that all is less than nothing and vanity? How greatly should I prize the blessed Bible, which reveals the way of reconciliation, and points to the Lamb of God, who alone can take away the sin of the world. Here is rest and peace for the troubled soul. Jesus has brought in an everlasting Righteousness, which is freely imputed to every humble believer. It is gratuitously offered in the Gospel "unto all," and is then placed "upon all them that believe;"* so that the vilest sinner, thus receiving Christ by faith, is "accepted in the Beloved,"† and through the Almighty power of the Holy Ghost, is made a new creature in Christ Jesus.‡

This is the Gospel. It brings "Glory to God in the highest."§ All the divine perfections harmonise and shed their united splendour around the Cross. It proclaims "Good-will toward men."§ Through the preaching of the gospel, through the holding up of Christ crucified, sinners are entreated to come; yea, are powerfully drawn to God, being assured, from this manifestation of his grace, that he willeth not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.‖ It diffuses "Peace on earth."§ The contending sinner lays down his hostile weapons, and through faith in the blood of Christ, obtains peace with God. The stormy conscience is hushed;

* Rom. iii. 22. † Eph. i. 6. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 17.; Gal. vi. 15.
§ Luke ii. 14. ‖ 2 Pet. iii. 9.

the rough disposition is softened; and these blessed effects of the peaceful reign of Jesus will never cease to operate, till nations shall learn war no more. Oh! that this happy period, this antepast of heaven, may be hastened on the earth. Lord grant that this millennial blessedness may now be felt and enjoyed in my own soul. Oh! blessed Jesus, thou Prince of Peace, reveal thyself to my heart; soften, melt, and renew it. Consume all the dross which it contains, and transform it, wholly, after thine image; that, while surrounded by evils of every name, and sorrows of every kind, which abound in this rebellious, dying world, I may enjoy the light of thy countenance, and the purifying influence of thy love.

These, O divine Redeemer, are indeed great blessings which I am now asking for; but am I not encouraged to enlarge my desires, to expand my heart, to stretch forth the hand of faith, that I may receive out of thy fulness, and grace for grace?—Thou, who art the fountain of living waters, hast said: "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."* "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."† Fill me with thy love; satiate my soul with thy goodness; and make me an everlasting trophy of thy grace.

Blessed Saviour! I am quite unable to love and serve thee, by any natural will or power of my own. At thy command, I would work out my own salvation, by the diligent use of appointed means; and yet, with fear and trembling, from a consciousness of my own depravity, and the deceits of Satan. But thou must work in me to will and to do of thy good pleasure, for without Thee I can do nothing.‡ As thou didst condescend to visit the humble dwelling of Lazarus, be pleased to look down upon a family of sinful worms, who now entreat the favour that thou bearest unto thy people. O! visit us with thy salvation, that we may daily rejoice in thee.§

* Rev. xxii. 17. † Psa. lxxxi. 10. ‡ Phil. ii. 12, 13.
§ Psa. cvi. 4, 5.

Many are the afflictions of the righteous;* afflictions peculiar to themselves. They partake, indeed, of bodily and temporal trials, in common with their brethren of mankind; but they are often called to endure tribulations from which the worldly are exempt. They suffer for righteousness' sake. They take up the cross and follow Christ, through evil report and good report. They submit to have their name cast out as evil; to be accounted as the off-scouring of all things. Their inward trials are known only to themselves, and to Him who searcheth the heart. They have to struggle against indwelling sin; against the law in the members, which wars against the law of the mind. They have to contend against the suggestions of unbelief, the workings of pride, the lustings of the flesh, and the love of the world. There are seasons when darkness seems to overspread their souls, and hope to suffer an eclipse. At such a period, Satan casts into the citadel of the heart, his fiery darts, and opens all his dread artillery to dismay and overcome the afflicted believers in Jesus. But *all-prayer* in the name of Christ prevails; for "when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him."† The foe is foiled—the darkness is dissipated; and light and joy once more fill the souls of the conquering saints.

If it be asked, Why is this? It is because the Lord, whose wisdom and love are infinite, is pleased to overule these trials to humble and purify his people. By these afflictions, their faith is strengthened; the spirit of prayer is quickened; their humility is increased; their love inflamed; and their dependence rendered more simple and entire.

The dearest children of God have been deeply afflicted by family trials, as well as by inward conflicts:—

Adam, had his Cain.—Gen. iv. 8.

Noah, his Ham.—Gen. ix. 22.

* Psa. xxxiv. 19. † Isa. lix. 19.

Abraham, his Ishmael.—Gen. xxi. 9, 10.
Isaac, his Esau.—Gen. xxvi. 34, 35.; Heb. xii. 16.
Jacob, his ten unnatural sons and erring daughter.—Gen. xxxvii. 18, 19., xxxiv. 1, 2.
Aaron, his Nadab and Abihu.—Lev. x. 1, 2.
Eli, his Hophni and Phinehas.—1 Sam. iii. 13.
Samuel, his Joel and Abiah.—1 Sam. viii. 1—3.
David, his Amnon and Absalom.—2 Sam. xiii. 14., xv. 14.
Jehoshaphat, his Jehoram.—2 Chron. xxi. 4, 6.
Jotham, his Ahaz.—2 Chron. xxviii. 1, 2.
Hezekiah, his Manasseh.—2 Chron. xxxiii. 1, 2.
Josiah, his Jehoiakim.—2 Chron. xxxvi. 5.

A pious parent cannot produce a pious offspring. The taint of original sin pollutes the streams which flow downwards from fallen Adam. Grace alone can effect the change.

These fatherly chastenings are all sanctified to the people of God. For the present, they are not joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward they yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby. God doth not willingly afflict nor grieve the children of men.* He corrects us like a wise and loving parent, for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness.†

Blessed Lord! enable me to be calm and passive under thy chastening hand. I know that thou dost all things well; and that it shall be well with them who love and fear thee. Keep me as the apple of an eye. Hide me under the shadow of thy wing. Wean my heart from all earthly vanities, and cause me to wing my way towards Thee. Thou canst embitter every comfort; and sweeten every cross. Preserve me from all idolatrous attachments. Reveal Thyself to me in the fulness of thy love, through a believing view of the Truth as it is in Jesus. I know, O Lord, that in very faithfulness, thou dost cause me to be

* Lam. iii. 33. † Heb. xii. 10, 11.

afflicted.* But oh! how gentle is the stroke of thy rod; how loving are thy corrections. I might justly experience the weight of thy wrath; instead of this, I am only called to bear the easy yoke of parental discipline. And shall I murmur or complain? O that songs of praise, and feelings of joy, and expressions of gratitude, may ever manifest the state of my heart. Thou, O Lord, art worthy to be praised. Thy loving-kindness is great. Thy mercy is infinite. Thy grace is unbounded. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name; for his name only is excellent, and his praise above heaven and earth.

How great, O worldling, is thy dread mistake,
How fatal sin's inebriating power;
Art thou content, for wealth, for honour's sake,
To bear the anguish of a dying hour?

Its pain, thy treacherous heart will quickly feel;
Soon must thou leave the fairest scene below;
Thy peace will bleed, as on the pointed steel,
When death shall hurl thee to the world of woe.

In flaming fire, with majesty arrayed,
The Lord will call thee to his awful throne;
Then earth, with all its dazzling joys, will fade
Beneath the terrors of Jehovah's frown.

Worldling! be wise; awake, awake from sin!
Ah! think how vain the pleasures of an hour;
The voice of mercy calls—it speaks *within*,
And bids thee trust in Jesu's Grace and Power.

Fly to the Cross—the Saviour thee invites;
A gracious Father calls thee to his Son;
Believe the Message, which his love indites,
Reject the Mercy—and thou art undone.

* Psa. cxix. 75.

LI.—GOD THE REFUGE FOR HIS PEOPLE.

"I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge, and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust."—Psa. xci. 2.

WHAT a marvellous truth, that God, against whom man hath sinned, should himself become the *sinner's Refuge* from the guilt and punishment of sin. Here, thou beholdest, O my soul, the length and breadth, the depth and height, of infinite, everlasting love! The way in which God can receive sinners to his favour, consistently with his holiness and justice, could never have been discovered by the highest archangel, much less by the reason of man. The Scriptures of truth alone reveal this amazing mystery. There we learn, that God in Christ reconciles the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;* that through his incarnation and death, he can now be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly;† having fulfilled the righteousness of the law for man, and paid the penalty due to eternal justice, by shedding his own most precious blood upon the Cross.‡ He is now revealed as a just God, and yet a Saviour.§ His law is magnified and made honourable, and all his perfections encompass the believing sinner, as with a shield. O! what a refuge for the oppressed; what a refuge in time of trouble! Yes! every poor sinner, who flies to a covenant God in Christ, has now a strong-hold, a tower of strength, into which he runneth, and is safe. To him, Christ is "as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."‖ Those, to whom Isaiah wrote, knew well the preciousness of this description of the "King that shall reign in

* 2 Cor. v. 18, 19. † Rom. iii. 26., iv. 5.
‡ Rom. viii. 3, 4., x. 4.; 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. § Isa. xlv. 21.
‖ Isa. xxxii. 2.

righteousness," of the "Man," thus prefigured by the Spirit of prophecy. They knew how to value a hiding-place from the death-spreading Simoom; a covert from the wild tornado; springs of water in the sandy desert; and the shadow of a great rock, to screen them from the burning rays of a tropical sun.

Hast thou, O my soul, fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before thee in the gospel? Hast thou made God thy Rock and Stay at all times, and on all occasions? Are thy comforts drawn from earthly sources, and thy hopes built on earthly dependencies; or, are they derived from God in Christ, the Fountain of true felicity; and founded on Him, the Rock of Ages?* O! happy is the man whose hope the Lord is,† and whose fresh springs, blessed Jesus, are in Thee!

While vessels, on a tempestuous ocean, are every moment in danger of being swallowed up by the yawning waves; the man, whose house is built upon the rocky shore, can view the storm, fearless and undismayed. So the Christian, whose refuge is the mighty God, can calmly contemplate the tumultuous sea of life, and smile amid the wildest uproar of the maddening multitude. This is the portion of the true believer. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee."‡ David enjoyed this peace, when he sang: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble: therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof."§ And what caused the Psalmist thus to feel peaceful in the midst of conflicting elements. and a warring world? He tells us: "The Lord reigneth; he is clothed with majesty." "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice." "The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble."‖

* Isa. xxvi. 4.; 1 Cor. x. 4. † Jer. xvii. 7.; 1 Tim. i. 1.
‡ Isa. xxvi. 3. § Psa. xlvi. 1—3. ‖ Psa. xciii. 1., xcvii. 1., xcix. 1.

The believer in Jesus, opening the book of God, is quieted from fear of evil. He reposes on the promises of Him, who is THE AMEN; whose word is eternal Truth; whose counsel shall stand; and of whose government and peace there shall be no end.*

He knows that God is the Ruler of the universe, the wise Disposer of all events; that nothing can happen without his order or permission; therefore, he is cheerful and happy under all the dark dispensations of providence, remembering that the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth; that the Judge of all the earth will do right, though clouds and darkness are round about him, and veil his bright designs.†

He knows that God, who is rich in mercy, desireth not the death of a sinner; that he is waiting to be gracious; that his arms are ever open to welcome the returning prodigal, and to become a city of refuge to all who flee unto him through his dear Son Jesus Christ.‡

He knows that God has power as well as will to save him;§ that his willingness was manifested at Bethlehem, at Gethsemane, at Golgotha;‖ that his power is daily displayed in the conversion of sinners, and the preservation of his saints.

He knows, from daily experience, that God is indeed a refuge, a place of defence against his spiritual enemies; he finds Jesus to be a near refuge to flee unto; for thus saith the Lord: "Am I not a God at hand?"** "He is not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being."†† Yes! the believer finds the Lord Jesus to be, not only "*as a little sanctuary*,"‡‡ while on earth, but also his ETERNAL REFUGE. Moses animated the

* Rev. iii. 14.; John xvii. 17.; Psa. xxxiii. 11.; Isa. ix. 7.

† Rev. xix. 6.; Gen. xviii. 25.; Psa. xcvii. 2.

‡ Eph. ii. 4.; Ezek. xviii. 32., xxxiii. 11.; Isa. xxx. 18.; John vi. 37.

§ Luke i. 37.; Heb. vii. 25.; 1 Tim. ii. 4.

‖ Matt. ii. 1.; Matt. xxvi. 36., Mark xiv. 32.; Matt. xxvii. 33., Mark xv. 22., John xix. 17.

** Jer. xxiii. 23. †† Acts xvii. 27, 28. ‡‡ Ezek. xi. 16.

journeying Israelites by this delightful view of the God of their fathers: "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."* In life, in death, in trouble, and in joy, the true believer finds a sure, a strong, a near refuge in Jesus Christ, who is "the strength of the poor, the strength of the needy, in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall."† Oh! blissful truth—Jesus is the believer's refuge, when the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised. At that awful hour, when the wicked shall call in vain upon the rocks and hills to cover them, and to hide them from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; the joyful saint shall lift up his head, knowing that his redemption, his complete glorification, draweth nigh.‡

Washed from his sins, through faith in the blood of Christ; clothed with the garment of salvation, the robe of the Redeemer's righteousness; purified and made meet for glory, through the power of the Holy Ghost; the now perfected believer is admitted through the gates into the city, and amidst the hallelujahs of saints and angels, receives the crown of glory. Then will "the voice of harpers harping with their harps," fill the heavenly temple with celestial harmony; then will the mighty chorus, from "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" of ransomed spirits, swell the anthem of praise "unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."§

O! my soul, delay not a moment to seek an interest in Jesus Christ. Fly to this friend of sinners. Go unto God the Father by him. Plead before the throne of grace the merits of thy Saviour. Cease not day and night to pray and cry unto the Lord, that thou mayest be lodged in the ark of the ever-

* Deut. xxxiii. 27. † Isa. xxv. 4.
‡ 1 Cor. xv. 52.; Rev. vi. 16.; Luke xxi. 28.
§ Rev. xiv. 2.; v. 11—13.

lasting covenant; be safely concealed in the cleft of the Rock, in the covenanted mercies of God in Christ.

How good, how gracious is the Lord. Infinite love directs the vast machine of providence, and makes all things work together for his people's good.* If present dispensations be dark, they soon shall be clothed with light; and if his people are now sad, they shall ere long be filled with joy. The designs of God, with respect to his Church, are full of mercy and truth. None of his purposes can fail of their accomplishment. He can make even the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain.† The mighty conqueror is but as a rod in his hand, the staff of his indignation, which he can wield or break at his pleasure. Satan may plot, and his agents execute their schemes; but in every age the Lord reigneth. He can still the madness of the people, or open the flood-gates of national judgments. He will do all his pleasure.‡ Infidelity may pour forth its poisonous waters; Popery may forge its despotic chains; and Anarchy light up the torch of discord: yet, in the midst of all these enemies to truth and righteousness, Jesus is the King of Zion: he shall reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet, and God be all in all.§

O! my soul, cleave then unto the Lord thy God. Make him thy refuge, thy hiding-place, till the indignation be overpast. Yet, alas! what cause have I to mourn over a cold, unfeeling heart. How strangely do I feel. I want to be all life, all love, all energy for Christ, and yet I seem more like a statue than a living creature. Why am I thus? Oh! what a depth of evil there is in the heart. Satan knows this well, and fails not to work upon it. But, of this I am persuaded, that the word of promise can never be reversed: "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him."‖ Believers, if need be, are

* Rom. viii. 28. † Psa. lxxvi. 10. ‡ Isa. xlvi. 10.
§ 1 Cor. xv. 25, 28. ‖ Isa. iii. 10.

now in heaviness through manifold temptations;* but this is their happiness, that God is with them;† this is their security, that they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.‡ As the sheep of Christ, they are lodged in his fold, they are safe under his protection, and shall never perish.§

In myself, I have no spiritual strength. Of myself, I can do nothing. I cannot stand upright a single moment, I am not able to move a single step towards heaven. By nature I am full of guilt and misery, far from God, from happiness, from heaven. How precious is the Gospel of the grace of God. There I behold Jesus, in the character of the good Samaritan, hastening to my relief; pouring into my heart the wine and balm of the covenant of grace, and saying to my soul: "'Be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee.' 'I am thy salvation.' I have paid the debt, I will give thee greater riches than the world can bestow, or Satan offer, as a lure to bind thee to their service."‖

O! Spirit of all grace, enable me to open the arms of faith to embrace this loving Saviour. Give me a heart of love to cleave to this compassionate Redeemer. Make me decided in my attachment, firm to my choice, and unshaken in my allegiance to my Almighty Sovereign.

My soul, upon the Saviour build,
Then wilt thou bear the rudest shock;
The powers of hell no more can harm,
Than dashing waves the solid rock.

How feeble, Lord, my best desires,
How weak my frail, inconstant heart;
If left of thee, the strongest saint,
From thee that moment would depart.

O! let me, with untiring zeal,
In my dear Saviour's footsteps go;

*1 Pet. i. 6. † Psa. xxxiv. 17—19.; xlvi. 1.; lxii. 8.
‡1 Pet. i. 5. § John x. 28. ‖ Matt. ix. 2.; Psa. xxxv. 3.

Take up his cross, and firmly leave,
All fading glories here below.

Jesus can make my burden light;
To his dear bosom I would flee.
O! bless'd retreat! remov'd from fear;
There, would I tranquil live to thee.

Perfect, O Lord, my peace in thee,
Thou Rock of Ages—God of might;
In every storm my haven be,
My Refuge in death's dreary night.

LII.—THE RELIGION OF THE HEART.

"The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."—Rom. xiv. 17.

If we are faithful, we shall be tried. Every true Christian must carry his cross; he must endure tribulation for Christ's sake.* Let all them who would follow the Saviour, "sit down, and count the cost." We must prepare for the conflict with Satan and the world. Our blessed Lord has told us what we must expect if we are his faithful followers: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you: if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me."†

Shall we, then, shrink from the cross? Shall we be ashamed to confess Christ crucified? Alas! we

* Matt. xvi. 24., Mark viii. 34.; John xvi. 33. † John xv. 18—21.

should both shrink and be ashamed, if left to ourselves. Nothing but the Spirit of Christ can make us dauntless in our Master's cause.

How encouraging are the words of St. Peter: "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.....Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator."*

Faith without root will wither away. "They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have *no root*, which for a *while believe*, and in time of temptation fall away."†

Mere animal excitement cannot withstand the storm and tempest. It has been quaintly remarked that many will follow religion while she walks in silken slippers; who will forsake her, when she is compelled to walk in iron shoes. When the venerable Cranmer was spreading his hospitable table at Lambeth Palace, he was surrounded by admiring guests: but when enclosed between the dreary walls of a Papal dungeon, few cared to visit him there. Thus it was with Cranmer's Lord and ours. In the hour of his extremity, the disciples forsook him, and fled!‡

Head knowledge, and zeal for ceremonies, can figure away in the sunshine; but they cannot endure the faggot or the rack. Nay, they shrink beneath the lash of ridicule, and the pointed finger of scorn.

Grace alone can render us triumphant over every enemy, and strengthen us in the hour of death and danger. Let us, then, seek for the religion of the heart; that internal principle which will raise us above the agitations of the world, and prepare us for the enjoyment of Christ in glory. "Be thou faithful unto death," said the glorified Redeemer, "and I will give thee a crown of life."§

* 1 Pet. iv. 14, 19. † Luke viii. 13. ‡ Matt. xxvi. 56.
§ Rev. ii. 10.

The visible Church abounds with thousands of religious professors, but with comparatively few possessors of real godliness. It is much easier to observe an outward form than to crucify a beloved lust. The Church of Rome, though loaded with ceremonials, is proverbially corrupt. God requireth truth in the inward parts.* He looketh at the heart, and will be worshipped in spirit and in truth.† No ordinance can, of *itself*, confer a benefit apart from the grace of God, and the state of heart of the worshippper. To suppose otherwise, is to return from Protestantism to Popery. The graces of repentance and faith are declared in Scripture to be essential to the right and saving reception of the Gospel.‡ The impenitent and unbelieving cannot partake of the salvation which God hath provided.§ Would it not, therefore, be dangerous to urge men to approach the Lord's Table, without a due preparation of heart; or, to lead them to suppose that they are privileged to come, because they were *regenerated* in baptism, and consequently are to be regarded as saints, though they give not the least evidence of *spiritual* regeneration?

True religion is seated in the heart. A man may have very clear notions of the doctrines of grace, but if the grace of those doctrines do not influence his heart, and shine forth in a holy life, all his knowledge will profit him nothing. A person may speak well and fluently upon religion, and yet be quite *dead* to the power of that Gospel, on which he speaks so well. Something more is requisite to form the true Christian than head-knowledge and religious conversation. And yet, how many, alas! content themselves with these attainments, and fancy themselves to be *something*, when in God's estimation they are no better than sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal.‖

* Psa. li. 6. † John iv. 23.

‡ Acts ii. 38., iii. 19.; Rom. iv. 3, 5., Heb. xi. 6.

§ Rom. ii. 5., 1 Cor. vi. 9., Gal. v. 21.; Luke xii. 46.; Eph. v. 6., Heb. iii. 19., Rev. xxi. 8. ‖ 1 Cor. xiii. 1., &c.

Being vainly puffed up, they assume the character of teachers, before they know themselves, or the very first elements of Christianity, even their own ignorance, helplessness, and corruption.

Blessed Saviour, deliver me, I humbly beseech thee, from spiritual pride and self-confidence. Lead me by the footsteps of thy chosen flock, which has ever followed Thee the Chief Shepherd, through the valley of humiliation, where alone are to be found the still waters of comfort, and the rich pastures of thy promised grace.

It is plainly revealed in Scripture, that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.* Two things are required, which God alone, by his Holy Spirit, can bestow, and which, through the merits of Christ, he is willing to impart to all who sincerely seek for them, through faith in his beloved Son.

The first is:—The divine illumination of the understanding.

The second is:—A relish for, and delight in, spiritual things.

Without the first, an awful darkness respecting the things of God, would envelope the mind. And, without the second, no pleasure could be found in them, even if the eyes of the understanding were enlightened to perceive their value. The visible Church contains within itself, many painful instances of those, to whom it may be said: "Thou which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?"† Others there are who resemble the stationary guide-post. They only point out the road. How blessed are they who with Paul can say: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."‡ And with Moses: "We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good."§

Through a spiritual discernment we perceive the excellencies of the gospel; and by a spiritual taste

*1 Cor. ii. 14. † Rom. ii. 21. ‡ 1 Cor. xi. 1. § Numb. x. 29.

we enjoy them. Faith is the appropriating grace, that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen ;* that faith which is ever looking unto Jesus; that faith which receives him as revealed in the gospel; that faith which lives upon him, and is continually tasting that the Lord is gracious. The baptised worldling, the orthodox formalist, knows nothing of this saving grace. It is wrought in the heart, solely through the power of the Holy Ghost.†

Lord increase my faith. If I have it not, delay not in mercy to bestow it, ere the night of death overtake me. If I have in any measure received the precious gift, make it more evident to myself and others by its holy fruits. Pardon my importunity, for thou has said: "Ask, and it shall be given you."‡ "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint."§

Two things I would daily seek:—to love Christ above every other object—and, to obey his will above every other law. Love and obedience form the brightest evidence of discipleship. Without these fruits of righteousness, faith is dead; a mere notion of the head; the mere loquacity of the tongue. Many who now shine in their circle of religious friends, will, at last, be found no better than potsherds of earth covered with silver dross. Oh! that I may seek after *the religion of the heart.* Lord make me humble and sincere. Grant to me the faith of thine elect. Give me that spiritual perception, and that spiritual relish of heavenly truths, which is the blessed portion of thy children here, and the foretaste of their future glory.

How solemn are these words of the blessed Jesus: "Behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last."‖ Our Lord also

* Heb. xi. 1. † 1 Cor. xii. 9.; Gal. v. 22.
‡ Matt. vii. 7., xviii. 19., xxi. 22.; John xi. 22., xv. 7., xvi. 24.; 1 John v. 14, 15.
§ Luke xviii. 1.
‖ Luke xiii. 30.; Matt. xix. 30., xx. 16.; Mark x. 31.

declares, that "that which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God."*

How should professors of the gospel look well to themselves. These declarations, O my soul, speak forcibly to thee. I profess to be a Christian, attend the ordinances of the Gospel, associate with pious characters, have family worship, abstain from places of worldly amusement: so far is well. But all this may be done, while the heart remains *unchanged*. The Pharisees went farther than this, in their austerities; but He, who knew the heart, said to them: "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you."† And to his listening disciples: "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."‡

A person, living in a round of outward duties, may be esteemed *first* by many who look only at the outward appearance, while he is viewed as *last* by the Searcher of hearts. A talking, forward professor, may attract attention, and gain admirers; but it is the humble, meek, self-denying believer, who studiously avoids all public notice, while he is labouring with all his might to advance the interests of the Gospel, that will be owned by Jesus in that great day, when true faith will be made manifest by its genuine fruits. "Let your light *so* shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."§

Humility is the peculiar characteristic of the people of God.‖ The converted sinner is so deeply humbled on account of his former transgressions, that he is completely stripped of all self-righteousness and self-dependence; and so charmed with the love and grace of the Redeemer, that he is willing to spend and be spent in his service. He acknowledges himself, and feels himself to be the chief of sinners, and less than the least of all saints. Hence he gives God

* Luke xvi. 15. † John v. 42. ‡ Matt. v. 20.
§ Matt. v. 16. ‖ Matt. xviii. 4.; Rom. xii. 3, 10, 16.

all the glory of his salvation; trusts in nothing but the finished and complete righteousness of Jehovah Jesus; and declares with the fullest conviction of his own insufficiency and vileness, and of that Saviour's unspeakably glorious merits and power, "by the grace of God I am what I am."*

He desires to be nothing in his own esteem, and the esteem of others, that Christ may be glorified. All his aims are directed to promote the exaltation of the Saviour, and to debase the idol *self*, more and more. He daily mourns over those remainders of corruption in his heart, which are continually lusting against the Spirit; and rejoices in Christ Jesus, as his Atonement, Righteousness, and Hope of glory.

Hence, while this view of himself keeps him humble, the view of the Saviour animates him to the conflict, and makes him finally more than conqueror over all his spiritual enemies.† Feeling his own helplessness, he leans on the strength of Jesus; and knowing his own blindness, he prays without ceasing, for the illuminating influences of the Holy Spirit. He believes, and is not confounded. The Spirit of Christ dwells in his heart, witnessing with his Spirit that he is a child of God, and filling him with heavenly affections, holy desires, and spiritual joy. He thus bears the image of Christ, and evidences his election of God. His salvation being all of grace, he, with his whole soul, gives God the glory.

Such is the true believer, who is born from above; born of the Spirit. In this world he is often esteemed last; is branded by the formalist, as an enthusiast; and by the worldly, as a madman. But he shall be *first* in that day, when Christ shall make up his jewels, when he shall be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.‡ True religion will always influence the whole inner man. All the powers and faculties of the soul are brought under its sway. Forms and ceremonies are unavailing without this principle of grace, for "circumcision availeth

* 1 Cor. xv. 10. † Rom. viii. 37. ‡ 2 Thess. i. 10.

nothing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love."* "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."† "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."‡

In the present day much is being done, and still more devised, for the spiritual good of mankind. Christians are invited, on Gospel principles, to aid in these labuors of love. But while the principles may be warmly enforced, yet the *Gospel motive in the heart* can only be imparted from above. The love of Christ to us should indeed constrain us to every act of self-denying obedience; yet, how few comparatively feel that love to the Saviour which urges onward in the career of usefulness.

It is painful to think how much exertion may be made, and how much money expended, without one single motive which can render the service and sacrifice well-pleasing unto God. If called to labour in the field of benevolence, how needful it is to watch over the heart, to examine the principles, to scrutinise the motives of our actions. There is so much selfishness in our fallen nature, such a desire of pre-eminence, such a secret delight in human applause, such a high opinion of one's own powers and talents, however weak and inefficient, that there is daily need for that blessed grace which alone can make us humble, and keep us so.

Lord, root out of my heart that deadly weed of pride, which is so hateful to thee, and so destructive to my soul. Give me, blessed Saviour, that humble, lowly mind which dwelt in thee. O let me tread in thy steps. Clothe me with humility.

It is a serious truth, that a person may spend his whole life in feeding others, while he starves himself. The soul cannot thrive without spiritual meditation, retirement, secret prayer, and a devout study of the

* Gal. v. 6., vi. 15. † Rom. xiv. 17. ‡ Matt. vii. 21.

Holy Scriptures. The neglect of these things is the cause why so many cry out: "My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me."* "They made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept."†

God has closely connected the means with the end, as he has also the precept with the promise; but still a certain state of heart is needed, to attain the blessing. The understanding may be well furnished with Gospel truth, and yet the heart remain destitute of Gospel grace. We ought, and it is our privilege, and should be our desire, to lay out our time and talents, however small, for Christ and the good of souls; but in doing this, we must look well to the spring, the motive, the principle of action. This cannot be too deeply or too frequently impressed upon the mind. All must flow from faith in the Saviour. All must be the genuine expression of ardent love to him. All must be directed simply to his glory. Self must be annihilated. Pride must be crucified. The praise of men must be disregarded: and Christ, and Christ alone must be seated on the throne of the affections. Then will a cup of cold water, given in his name be accepted. Then will the widow's mite be esteemed precious. Then will the smallest effort done in faith to glorify Christ among men, be well-pleasing unto God.

Lord! give me simplicity and sincerity, humility and love. Let all my doings be the fruit of faith. O let me think, and speak, and act, and live for thee. Two things I would wish to attain—to say little, and do much. Lord, set a watch before the door of my mouth. Give me wisdom to know when to speak, and when to be silent. Let my speech be alway with grace. Let me ever be willing to help forward the cause of truth in the earth, yet always desirous to take the lowest place among the labourers in thy vineyard.

However blind the world may be to its own faults,

* Isa. xxiv. 16. † Cant. i. 6.

it is quick sighted enough in discovering the failings of religious professors. The men of the world readily perceive their inconsistencies, and charge them upon the religion which they profess. Thus a vainglorious professor of godliness often spoils much good, and produces much evil. Christian prudence is therefore necessary, and, when springing from a knowledge of the human heart, from self-distrust, from genuine humility, from a real desire to advance the cause of God in simple dependence on divine aid, it is the means of effecting great things. In such a world as this, how greatly do we need the wisdom of the serpent combined with the harmlessness of the dove. When the blessed Gospel renews and governs the heart, through the Almighty energy of the Holy Spirit, then every excellence appears in its proper place and due proportion. The symmetry and beauty of the structure manifest a divine architect, whose prerogative alone it is to "make all things new."*

The religion of the heart is simply FAITH WORKING BY LOVE.† Jesus is the object of faith. Faith looks to him as the all-atoning sacrifice for sin. It comes to him as the helper and hope of the soul. It receives him as the Prophet, Priest, and King of his Church, the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Faith feeds upon him, as the bread of life; walks in his light, who is the light of the world; and, uniting the soul to him, as the branch is to the vine, it draws from him that grace and strength which causes the fruits righteousness to appear and abound.

O! what a precious gift is faith, wrought in the heart through the power of the Holy Ghost. "Without faith it is impossible to please God; for he that cometh unto God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."‡ By faith, we stand in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. By faith, we walk steadily and perseveringly in the narrow way of holy obedience.

* Rev. xxi. 5. † Gal. v. 6. ‡ Heb. xi. 6.

By faith, we overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. By faith, we substantiate things hoped for, and realise things not seen.*

Is faith thus precious? Then surely it must be the solicitude of all to obtain it. Alas! no. Thousands of Christians who profess to believe, have it not. Where true faith dwells, its effects become visible. "Faith without works is dead."†

Does faith work by love to Christ to his people, his word, his ministers, his cause, his Sabbaths? Then, where true faith is, there love will be in active operation. Do we perceive this energy of love in all who call themselves Christians? Ah! no! Few, comparatively few, show their faith by a love, ardent, self-denying, and constant. Faith purifies the heart. Is sin hated by all Christian professors? Is holiness the element in which they live? Alas! the reverse is too often the case.

Faith overcomes the world. Do all who profess to follow the meek and lowly Saviour, renounce those pomps and vanities from which he came to deliver them? How many thousands *practically* deny the doctrine of their baptismal regeneration, by living in *direct opposition* to the vows and promises made in their names at their baptism! Are all baptised persons bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit? Facts prove that they do not. The world maintains an awful power in the visible Church. It forms the crying sin of the age. That love of money, that thirst for power, that fondness for vain show, that quest of pleasure which pervades all grades of society, evidences our fallen state as a professing Christian people. We forget the solemn warning: "Repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."‡

Lord, give me that deep conviction of sin which David felt, when he said unto Nathan: "I have

* Heb. xi. † James ii. 17, 20, 26.

‡ Rev. ii. 5.

sinned;"* that heartfelt repentance which Job experienced, when he declared: "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes;"† that brokenness of heart which Peter manifested, when "he went out and wept bitterly,"‡ that faith which upheld the blessed Paul, when he said: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."§

O! Almighty Saviour! fill me with faith, hope, and love; till faith be lost in vision, hope in enjoyment, and love be for ever perfected in the region of peace and joy, through thine own everlasting grace.

Father of Mercies, Thee alone I bless,
Thou Source divine of comfort and of peace;
When sorrow o'er my heart its mantle throws,
And all my days are mark'd by tears and woes;
Thy gracious hand extends the kind relief,
Thy smile paternal calms the poignant grief.

Yes! dearest Lord, I know thy powerful word
In wildest storms can tranquil peace afford;
When death expands its cold and darksome shade,
And dire forebodings make the soul dismay'd,
Thy voice, bless'd Saviour, can dispel the gloom,
And light with joy my passage to the tomb.

How vain, how fleeting is the life of man!
How soon we traverse o'er its narrow span!
Without Thee, Lord, ah! what has life to boast,
A sinking vessel near a dangerous coast.
Death follows soon.—Yet, through its darken'd veil,
The dying saint can beams of glory hail!

As weary pilgrims wait their last remove,
My longing soul desires the joys above;
Eternal day will soon appear in view,
Then heaven *possess'd* will prove the *promise true*.
A stranger here, I would abide a while,
Then hasten homeward to my Saviour's smile.

* 2 Sam. xii. 13. † Job xlii. 6.
‡ Matt. xxvi. 75.; Luke xxii. 62. § 2 Tim. i. 12.

LIII.—REALISING THE DIVINE PRESENCE.

"And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."—Exod. xxxiii. 14.

HAPPY is the man who daily lives under the guardian care of the Almighty, who can say: "My beloved is mine, and I am his."* "This God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death."† "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory."‡ "My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."§

O! what a mercy it is, to have such a gracious God to look to. Lord, be pleased to draw my heart wholly to thyself, and enable me to place my trust under the shadow of thy wings; to realise thy presence at all times. Cause the light of thy countenance to shine upon me, then will sorrow flee away at thy presence, and joy spring up in my heart.

I live in a world which abounds with sin and grief; the latter ever growing out of the former, as its natural fruit. But, the blood of Christ can remove the one, and the Spirit of Christ can alleviate the other, so that all things shall work together for good. O! for a living faith, which can appropriate to itself the Saviour's merits, and extract sweetness from the bitterness of affliction.

Soon, very soon, must this frail tenement be laid in the silent tomb; shut out from the eye of man, and all the changes of this passing scene. O! that my soul may then be *shut* in with Christ, where sin and sorrow can never enter. My happiness will then commence; my bliss will be completed, when my raised body, spiritualised and refined, shall be reunited to my redeemed spirit on the morning of the

* Cant. ii. 16. † Psa. xlviii. 14. ‡ Psa. lxxiii. 24.
§ Psa. lxxiii. 26.

resurrection of the just. O! blissful and glorious period! How every earthly thing fades before it, as shadows before the rising sun.

"How vain are all things here below,
How false, and yet how fair;
Each pleasure has its poison too,
And every sweet a snare."

Our most endeared enjoyments are transitory, and mixed up with many cares. If we cultivate the rose and admire its blushing leaves, and sweet perfume, the prickly thorn protects it; if we would possess the honeyed hive, it is guarded by a thousand stings. Truly our comforts are entwined with crosses. This is not our rest.

The child of God can see wisdom and love in all this dispensation. Before Adam fell, there was no annoyance. In Paradise all was delight. But now the earth is covered with thorns and thistles, emblems of the Fall. We are daily taught, that it is through much tribulation we enter into the kingdom. This world is a school of discipline to the children of God, and afflictions are sent as medicine to heal the diseases of the mind, through the power and skill of the heavenly Physician. This world is a place of trial; but thanks be to redeeming love, "There remaineth a rest to the people of God;"* a purchased inheritance, a kingdom reserved for them.

In Scripture, we find that promises are in general made to *characters*. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."† If we ask, who shall see God? the promise replies: "the pure in heart." There are some broad and indefinite invitations which include within them the greatest blessings, as "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."‡ "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."§ And yet, even here, *faith* is included; for who will *look* to Christ, or *come* to Christ, but those who are

* Heb. iv. 9. † Matt. v. 8. ‡ Isa. xlv. 22.
§ John vi. 37.

led to feel their need of him through the secret grace of the Holy Spirit on their hearts; and who, like the bitten Israelites in the wilderness, cast their dying eyes upon the remedy provided for them?

It would be presumptuous to expect the glory of beholding Christ, and the felicity of dwelling for ever with him, if we continue in a state of unbelief and impurity. Antinomianism is one of the depths of Satan; a most deadly poison to the soul. Salvation by grace, through faith in the blood of Christ, includes three great blessings:

I. A deliverance from the guilt, condemnation, and punishment of sin, through the death and righteousness of the Son of God:

II. A deliverance from the love, power, and pollution of sin, through the operation of the Holy Ghost: And,

III. A restoration to the divine image, which was lost through the Fall; and a realisation of the divine presence in the soul, as the foretaste and earnest of future glory.

This is the nature of Christ's salvation, which, while it cuts up the roots of self-righteousness, makes the believer righteous before God; and while it humbles him in the dust, makes him an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ. O! what a glorious salvation is that which destroys the image of Satan, and renews us after the image of Christ. There is much *light* in the nominally Christian world; many go to and fro, and knowledge is increased; but does genuine piety, heart religion, true humility, keep pace with the growing expansion of our intellectual powers? Knowledge is power. It is a weapon which cuts two ways. If sanctified, it becomes a blessing; but if it be knowledge without religion; if it be knowledge drawn only from human science, to the neglect of the Book of God, it only sharpens the mind, and fits the agent for deeper works of darkness. Unsanctified knowledge is closely allied to Infidelity, as mental blindness is to Popery. Nothing but the light of

God's word, through the illuminating influence of the Holy Spirit on the understanding and heart, can preserve us from being carried away by the sophistries of the infidel, the superstitions of the Papist, or the solicitations of the worldly and profane. Our hearts are naturally prone to evil. Our minds are naturally dark. Hence arises the necessity of reading diligently the Scriptures of truth with humble prayer for divine teaching, that we may know God, and his dear Son Jesus Christ, which is life eternal; that we may know ourselves, and the world around us; that we may know the way of life, and realise the presence of God while journeying to his courts above.

O! that I could daily realise the presence and providence of God. This would make me watchful and submissive. Did I continually feel the truth of Hagar's declaration: "Thou God seest me,"* what a holy fear would fill my heart. To realise the divine presence, to live as seeing him who is invisible through the medium of his word and works, is to walk as Enoch, Noah, and Abraham walked. It is to walk by faith. It is to walk so as to please God.

How sublime are the words of Jehovah: "Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord."† David lived under the sanctifying influence of this truth: "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. *If I take the wings of the morning,* and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee."‡

* Gen. xvi. 13. † Jer. xxiii. 23, 24. ‡ Psa. cxxxix. 7—12.

"If I take," says David, "the *wings of the morning*:"—If "I could even fly upon the wings or rays of the morning light, which diffuses itself with such velocity over the globe from east to west, instead of being beyond Thy reach, or by this sudden transition be able to escape Thy notice, Thy arm could still at pleasure prevent or arrest my progress, and I should still be encircled with the immensity of Thy essence."*

O! my soul, seek for grace thus to walk day by day as in the presence of thy God and Saviour. Art thou washed from thy sins through the blood of Christ? Then fear not. He, who filleth all space with his presence is thy Friend. His arm encircles thee. His power protects thee. His eye is ever upon thee. His ear is ever open to thy cry. Nothing can harm thee without his permission; nothing shall harm thee by his command; for, if, thou art united to Christ by a living faith, He will make all things work together for thy good; he will supply all thy need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.† Dost thou love God? Then rejoice in the sweet assurance, that nothing shall be able to separate thee from his love.‡ He is engaged in Covenant to keep thee in all thy ways; to keep thee unto life eternal.§ As the Head of the Church militant is now in glory, so shall all the members of Christ's mystical body be united with their Head, as the Church triumphant, in the kingdom of heaven.‖ Nothing is so sure as the glorification of the persevering believer. "He that endureth to the end shall be saved." "We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning

* The sentiment in this noble passage is remarkably striking, and the description truly sublime, when we consider that "Light has been proved, by many experiments, to travel at the astonishing rate of 194,188 miles in one second of time! and comes from the sun to the earth, a distance of 95,513,794 miles, in eight minutes and nearly twelve seconds!" (See "Comprehensive Bible.")

† Rom. viii. 28.; Phil. iv. 19. ‡ Rom. viii. 38, 39.
§ Psa. xci. 11. ‖ John xii. 26., xiv. 2, 3., xvii. 24.

of our confidence steadfast unto the end." "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life!"* The Word of Truth has said it, and it cannot be changed: "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."†

O! how safe, how happy is the true believer in Jesus. He may have trials, temptations, afflictions, griefs, and sorrows. This is the lot of God's saints in every age, whom he calls his jewels, his peculiar treasure. They are chosen in Christ "before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy, and without blame before him in love."‡ They are "from the beginning chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."§ They are "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit;" therefore they continue faithful even unto the end, being "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation;" according to the word of Christ, "My sheep shall never perish."‖ They are called in time by the Gospel. They obey the calling, and suffer willingly the hatred of men, and the malice of devils. They confess Christ boldly, and have to endure the contradiction of sinners, the rage of persecution, and sometimes a painful death. But still they are safe in the Ark of the Covenant; they are happy in the love of God. Christ and heaven are theirs. A glorious immortality awaits them. Soon they will be in the presence of the Saviour whom they love; translated into that world of bliss, where the Lamb is the light thereof, and God its glory.**

O! my soul, cease not to pray for an increase of faith, and love, and holy obedience; an increase of patience, resignation, and hope; an increase of peace, and joy, and gratitude; an increase of every grace, by which God may be glorified, the Saviour

* Matt. x. 22.; Heb. iii. 14.; Rev. ii. 10. † Rom. viii. 29, 30.
‡ Eph. i. 4. § 2 Thess. ii. 13. ‖ 1 Pet. i. 2, 5.; John x. 28.
** Rev. xxi. 23.

honoured, and thyself fitted for the participation of those blessings which abound in the Paradise above.

The excellent Henry observed: "He who eyes providences, shall never want providences to eye." This was David's experience. He was an accurate observer both of Providence and Grace; therefore he never wanted motives either for humiliation, confidence, gratitude, or praise.

The fifty-first Psalm is expressive of the deepest self-abasement, and of humble hope in the divine mercy, after the message of God to him by Nathan the Prophet.

The sixty-second Psalm declares his trust in God at all times, as the God of his salvation, the rock of his strength, and his refuge.

The one hundred and third Psalm is a song of thanksgivings for mercies, countless as the sands.

The one hundred and seventh Psalm is a beautiful survey of the Providence of God, with a call on all men to praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men. Indeed all the songs of the sweet Psalmist of Israel, have cheered and comforted the Church of God in every age. Like David, in our humble measure, may we glorify God, and solace the Christian pilgrim on his way to Zion.

Are we the children of God? Then we may rest calmly under all providences, whether of a comforting or bereaving nature. How precious are the words of Christ: "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings? and not one of them is forgotten before God: but even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows."* As if our Lord had said: If your heavenly Father remembers the little birds of the air, to protect and feed them, will he forget *you*, for whom he gave his only begotten Son?

St. Paul answers this question by the Holy Ghost: "He that spared not his own Son, but deli-

* Luke xii. 6, 7.

ered him up for us all, how shall he not with him lso freely give us all things?"*

Blessed Lord, "thou wilt keep him in perfect eace, whose mind is stayed on thee."† O! may I ever el a confidential reliance on thy power and grace, rough faith in thy promises in Christ Jesus. Thou ilt never forsake those who make thy word their ust. Give me a strong faith to glorify thee under l circumstances, whether of trouble or of joy. Let ot the things of time obscure the views of eternity. Vean my heart from earth. Fix my affections on hyself. Be thou my Centre and my Crown. May l my fresh springs of happiness be in Thee; all my opes of glory flow from Thee. Prepare me for Thy ngdom, and oh! make me there an everlasting onument of Thy love.

Happy the man, who, in this world of woe,
Where troubles spring, and bitter waters flow,
Enjoys the presence of his pardoning God,
And lies submissive 'neath his chastening rod.

While journeying homeward through a desert land,
He trusts the guidance of a Father's hand:
Though darkness oft o'erspread his earthly scene,
His soul is ever peaceful and serene.

'Midst swelling waves, and on a boisterous sea,
From fearful doubts and sad forebodings free:
With joy, at length, he lands upon the shore,
Where sin and sorrow shall be known no more.

O! blessed Lord! thy people's Guide and Guard,
Their present Portion, and their great Reward,
Be Thou my Hope, my Help, my Joy, my Crown,
O keep me—save me—seal me for Thy own.

* Rom. viii. 32. † Isa. xxvi. 3.

LIV.—EARNEST DESIRES FOR PARDONING AND SANCTIFYING GRACE.

"For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great."—Psa. xxv. 11.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."—Psa. li. 10.

DAVID'S plea must be mine: "O Lord pardon mine iniquity for it is great." Also the publican's prayer —"God be merciful to me a sinner."* And Peter's cry—"Lord, save me!" or I perish.†

With shame and confusion of face I look up unto thee, O! thou bleeding Lamb, for having slighted thy goodness, and loving-kindness towards me. Take away this earthliness from my mind; this coldness from my heart: this insensibility to the things of God. Preserve me from a secret alienation of heart; from a growing lukewarmness. Suffer not the enemy to triumph over me. Suffer me not to fall from thee.

Adorable Jesus! I acknowledge my vileness, my worthlessness, my ingratitude. But, oh! let me still hope in thy mercy; still plead the merit of thy blood; still expect thy renewing strength; still long, and look, for the visits of thy grace. I am a sinner, and thou didst die to save sinners.

Thou art the Rock of Ages, the everlasting Strength. Endue me with power from on high to overcome all my indwelling corruptions, which, like a thick cloud, intervene between my soul and thee, the Sun of Righteousness, and thus prevent the rays of thy consolation from gladdening my heart, and making me to abound in the fruits of righteousness.

To whom can I look;—to whom can I go, but unto Thee, thou Friend of sinners. Lord, I come, invited by thy word. I come at thy sweet call, for

* Luke xviii. 13. † Matt. xiv. 30.

pardon, peace, and holiness. Thou delightest to save. O make me willing to be saved in thy way, and on thy terms. May I have grace to receive salvation as the gift of grace, and to plead for mercy as a lost sinner, through thy all-prevailing name and merits. Thou, O Jesus, art exalted "to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins;"* and shall I not praise thee for such infinite love, such grace abounding to the chief of sinners? O give me a heart to praise thee. Stir up my languid desires. Inflame my cold affections. Set my whole soul on fire with holy love. Lord! I am sorely grieved, that I love thee so little; that my affections move so slowly towards thee. But, thou givest more grace.† O bestow it upon me in richer abundance, that so I may live more to thy glory, and to the comfort of my own soul, till joy shall be complete, and love perfected, in thy presence and glory.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." What reason I have continually to complain of a barren heart. Did I say *barren?* Is it not full of evil? And, yet, it is a barren heart still, destitute of that love and humility, and those heavenly affections, which dwell in every child of God. O! how I long to be a real, sincere disciple of Jesus Christ. It is easy to make a profession of religion; that may be done by fallen nature; but to possess the Spirit of Christ, can only be enjoyed by those whom Sovereign Grace endues with so great a benefit. O! that I knew how to estimate the blessings of salvation. Lord, enlighten my mind to see more clearly the riches of thy grace, the wonders of thy love, and the greatness of thy mercy, as manifested to perishing sinners, in Christ Jesus. O give me to taste thy goodness, and relish those sublime truths, which are revealed in thy holy word. How painful, that I should be so little affected by the agony and bloody sweat, the cross and passion,

* Acts v. 31. † James iv. 6.

of my suffering Redeemer. Why is not my soul all on fire, when I think of thy love? Why is it not melted into tears, when I think of my dying Saviour? Am I harder than the rock in Horeb? Colder than the northern ice? Lord! smite my rocky heart with the rod of thy loving-kindness; dissolve my frozen affections, by the melting beams of thy grace.

Ah! "When shall I be made clean? when shall it once be."* Lord grant that it may be NOW. This night I may be in eternity. O! thou blessed Jesus, hasten thy glorious work of sanctification in my soul.

Alas! what cause have I to complain of that *dead sea* which lies within. O! that the living waters from the sanctuary may flow into my corrupted heart; that pure streams may constantly issue from it into my life and conversation.

How distressing are evil thoughts. How dreadful is the perception of such subtle wickedness, insinuating itself into the mind, and fixing its abode for days, in opposition to strivings, prayers, and tears! Lord lift up thine arm. "Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered."† Bid the powers of darkness to depart from me; or, if these thoughts arise from the corruption of my fallen nature, O remove this dreadful cause, by plunging me into the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness; by sitting upon me as a refiner's fire; and by consuming, through thy grace, the dross of sin.‡ Then shall I be holy and happy, peaceful and full of joy.

Thy name, blessed Jesus, is SAVIOUR, and thy work SALVATION. Thine office is to save sinners, and thy delight is with the sons of men. O then, encouraged by thy grace, by thy precious promises, and everlasting love; yea, emboldened by the sweetest calls and invitations of thy word, I come, blessed Friend of sinners, beseeching thee to pardon all my sins; to give me a new heart; to fill me with thy

* Jer. xiii. 27. † Psa. lxviii. 1.

‡ Zech. xiii. 1.; Mal. iii. 2, 3.; Isa. i. 25.

heavenly Spirit; and when I shall have served thee here on earth, to translate me to thy kingdom of glory.

Time is hastening on the wing. Every moment cuts off a portion of my life, and leaves me less time to work out my salvation. I cannot tell how soon I may be called into eternity,—an UNCHANGEABLE ETERNITY. My day of grace may speedily draw to its close. O! then, be diligent, my soul, be diligent. Work while it is day.

Delay not to seek the Saviour of sinners. Defer not that work, in comparison of which, all the boasted works of mortals are like painted bubbles, floating on the air. Soon they will burst and vanish away, but the *great work of salvation* will be commensurate with eternity. If thus to seek for pardoning grace, with ever-longing desire, be esteemed "vile," oh! that with David I may say: "I will yet be more vile."*

Blessed Jesus, behold me in mercy, in pity, and in love. O! let my wretchedness move thy compassion. Was there ever a more miserable object than I?

I am blind. Lord open my eyes to behold wondrous things out of thy law. Open my understanding to understand the Scriptures. Give me eye-salve that I may see thy beauty, and my deformity; thy perfection, and my pollution; thy preciousness, fitness, fulness, love, and glory, and my own helplessness and nothingness.

I am dumb. Lord unloose the string which guilt has tied. Enable me to speak thy praise; to tell of all thy wondrous works; to tell of thine everlasting love; thy groans, and tears, and blood, shed for the vilest of the vile, even, amazing grace, for me!

I am a helpless cripple. O! heal those bruises which sin has made; heal the bones which sin has broken. Restore me to the joys of thy salvation; then shall I walk in the path of thy commandments,

* 2 Sam. vi. 22.

and not be weary; then shall I run the heavenly race, and not faint; then shall I mount up in heart and affection to thee, my adorable Jesus, as on eagle's wings.

I am full of deadly diseases. Sin has poisoned all the springs of life; polluted all the powers of my soul; and filled me with a dire disease. O! Thou great Physician, apply the healing balm of thy precious blood; cleanse the thoughts of my heart by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit; and make me a *new man*, through the healthful Spirit of thy grace.

I have lost the sense of feeling. Sin has paralysed my soul; blunted the edge of my conscience; and hardened my heart. O! give me a quick perception of evil, a dread of its approach. May the very breath of sin be nauseous to my soul. May I never rest till the foul corruption be removed; till the inner man be wholly renewed by Thee.

I am spiritually dead. This is my state by nature. Though alive and active to evil, I am dead to God and goodness. Though my mind can devise mischief, I am not sufficient of myself, to think a a good thought. O! Thou, who art the Resurrection and the Life, bid me come forth from the grave of nature's corruption; bid me live, live to thee now, by faith and love; and with thee when time shall be no more, in thy kingdom of glory.

I am every thing that is vile and worthless. This I must be, if, by nature I am spiritually blind, and dumb, and helpless, and diseased, and paralysed, and dead! O! divine Emmanuel! Thou who art the Way, the Truth, and the Life, unite me to Thyself. Then, as viewed *in Thee*, I shall be beautiful and lovely in the eyes of my heavenly Father. *In thee*, and clothed with thy righteousness, I shall be complete, without spot and blameless. *In thee* I shall be adorned with celestial graces, through the indwelling Spirit of Holiness. O! blessed Saviour, wash me through thy precious blood, that every guilty stain may disappear; then, when presented before the

Eternal Father as thy ransomed one, and beheld by Him who cannot look upon iniquity, I shall be accepted IN THEE, as my Righteousness, Atonement, and Intercessor, with complacency and favour, and be admitted through Thee to endless joy and glory.

Whilst a sojourner and pilgrim upon earth, I want to be steadfast in faith, fervent in love, joyful in hope, low in my own eyes, meek in spirit, and pure in heart. These are the graces which constitute and adorn the Christian character. These are the gold, the silver, and the precious stones which I would build upon the true and only foundation—Jesus Christ the Righteous.

To Him I would look, as the Author and Finisher of every good and perfect gift, bestowed upon perishing sinners by the Spirit of his grace.

Without his Wisdom I shall wander into the mazes of error and heresies; be carried about by every wind of doctrine, and at last make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience.

Without his Strength I shall never hold on my way, or hold out to the end, amidst the oppositions of the world, the flesh, and the devil. I shall shrink from the cross. I shall betray my Saviour. I shall ruin my soul.

Without his Righteousness, I shall for ever remain under the curse. I may toil and labour by legal obedience, by ceremonial observances, by fastings and prayers, by mortifications and austerities, but I shall still remain unsaved and unblessed. If I seek for justification through these works of the law, I shall never find the favour of God. Jesus is the Lord our Righteousness. He alone can present me perfect and complete, clothed in his only merits. United to Him, all is changed. My works are works of love, not grounds of merit. They are accepted of the Father, through the Son, as fruits of faith and evidences of my adoption into his family.

O! then, "none but Christ, none but Christ." He alone, by his Spirit, can enable me to vanquish

the powers of darkness, to overcome the corruptions of my heart, to crucify the lustings of the flesh. The worst enemy I have is myself, strange to tell; yet, no less strange than true! I may fly from other enemies, but from this I cannot flee. Wherever I go, *self* still is there. The inbred evil travels with me. I may cross mighty oceans, traverse extensive deserts, plunge into the deepest recesses of the tangled forest, or the caverned earth, yet, in the profoundest solitude, —Self is there. The records of the ancient ascetics fully prove that Satan and inbred sin, are as powerful in the mountain cell as in the crowded city.

None but the harassed, tempest-tossed believer knows the dreadful conflicts between the flesh and the Spirit, between the law in his members and the law of his mind. His cry is: "Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I flee away and be at rest?"* But soon he feels the vanity of this wish; for should he fly on eagle's wings to the earth's remotest bounds, he would carry with him all the evil he deplores. He therefore prays for present grace and strength, for present power to conquer sin, and glorify his Saviour in the place and station divine wisdom has appointed for him. It would not be expedient or fit, that the internal conflict should be minutely described. Those thoughts which, like lightning, dart into the mind, and set the passions on fire, are known only to the tempted believer and the heart-searching God. When *hated* and *resisted*, they are temptations, and not sins. The shield of faith alone can quench these fiery darts of Satan. Happy is the tried believer who can say from the heart, at these distressing seasons: Lord, these vile imaginations are my grief, my burden, yea, the very anguish of my soul. My will rejects them, my heart detests them. Thou knowest that I long for deliverance from them. O! come blessed Spirit of Holiness, drive these fiends away. Wash me afresh in the Redeemer's blood. Breathe on my dying graces. Make me more vigorous, more alive to God,

* Psa. lv. 6.

more actively employed in all good things; then shall Satan find no room for his hellish injections, but heavenly peace and holy joy will reign triumphant in my soul.

O! that this may be the prayer of my heart, in seasons of conflict with indwelling sin. What continual need do I find of the grace of God. Alas! when I would do good, evil is present with me. I find it most difficult to keep my thoughts in subjection to the law of Christ, and to prevent my imagination from roving to the ends of the earth, and building ten thousand visionary schemes. How painful to feel the divine principle so weak, and the corrupt principle so strong. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."* We are saved, not by presumption, but by a holy fear. Thus saith the Lord, "I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put *my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.*"† Lord implant thy fear in my heart, entwined with hope in thy love, that, through a lively faith in Jesus, I may stand in the evil day, obtain the victory, and receive the crown of life, to the praise of the glory of thy grace.

My soul, bless'd Saviour, panteth after thee,
To find Thee, forms the summit of desire:
Thy smile can set my mourning spirit free,
Thy peace my heart with holy joy inspire.

A wretched wanderer on forbidden ground,
Thy Name and Will was long to me unknown;
But mercy sought me in this night profound,
And kindly drew me to Thyself alone.

Thy voice of love, in accents sweet and mild,
Reveal'd Salvation in that favour'd hour;
Thy Spirit form'd me to a little child,
The seal and witness of thy grace and power.

But ah! thy patience since that joyful day,
Has borne my languors with a Father's love;

* 1 Cor. x. 12. † Jer. xxxii. 40.

Thee have I left—ungrateful have I stray'd,
Though still my mercies ever faithful prove.

Why do I feel such weakness in my heart?
Such cold affections to my heavenly Friend?
It is not *Thou*, bless'd Saviour—*I* depart
From Thee, whose love nor measure knows nor end.

Take pity Lord—Dispel my guilty fear;
Subdue my heart—its hardness now remove.
My soul on GOLGOTHA to Thee was dear,
I rest, O God, on thine Eternal Love.

LV.—A SHORT REVIEW OF THE PROPHECIES RELATING TO OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, WITH REFERENCES TO THE NEW TESTAMENT FOR THEIR FULFILMENT.

"These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me."—Luke xxiv. 44.

"Search the Scriptures;.....they are they which testify of me."—John v. 39.

"We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the Prophets did write."—John i. 45.

"The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."—Rev. xix. 10.

WHEN Infidelity is erecting its standard against the truth, and labouring to turn away thousands from the faith; when Popery is augmenting its power, by which the *light* will be withdrawn in proportion as that power is strengthened; it behoves the friends of Jesus to study well the oracles of truth, that they may be able to withstand the sophistries of infidels and every deviation from the word of God. As Bible Christians, we should "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh us a reason of the

hope that is in us with meekness and fear."* It is well to know, on solid ground, that we have not followed cunningly devised fables, but that our faith is founded on the truth of Jehovah. Then we shall continue in the faith grounded and settled, and shall not be moved away from the hope of the Gospel.†

There are three evidences for the truth of Christianity, which, like a three-fold cord, cannot be broken.

I.—*The external evidence*, arising from the fulfilment of Prophecy, as recorded in the inspired writings of the Evangelists, in the subsequent pages of history, and confirmed by numerous credible authors in every age. Also, from well-attested miracles which were a *divine seal* to the truth of Christianity at its first establishment.

II.—*The internal evidence*, arising from the holy character of the religion of Christ; from its wonderful adaptation to the wants and miseries of a fallen world; to the promotion of man's *real* happiness; and to the display of the perfections of God.

III.—*The inward witness* in the heart of every true believer in Jesus, arising from the change wrought in him through this blessed religion, whereby he is raised from the ruins of the Fall, restored to the divine favour and image, and made a partaker of all that Christ has done and suffered for him.

Surely, then, it must be profitable to search the records of eternal life; to examine the foundation of our hope. The blessed result of this search will be, if only we seek in faith, that we shall find the Pearl of Great Price. We shall assuredly know, that Jesus Christ is the promised Redeemer, the long-expected Messiah, who shall reign over all the earth, and of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end.‡ This knowledge will gladden our hearts, purify our souls, and be the earnest of future glory; for thus prayed the interceding Saviour, "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the

* 1 Pet. iii. 15. † Col. i. 23. ‡ Isa. ix. 7; Zech. xiv. 9.

only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."*

The poor illiterate Christian may not be able to search the Records of Antiquity, nor to study learned dissertations on Prophecy:—he may not be able to contemplate, in all its bearings on time and eternity, the sublime plan of his Redemption:—Is he, then, deprived of solid evidence that Christianity is of God? Surely not. If redeemed through the blood of Christ, he possesses an INWARD WITNESS to the Truth. He can say to infidels and cavillers, This "one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."† Once I was miserable, now I am happy. Once I was far from God, now I am his adopted child. Once I was the slave of sin and Satan, now I have obtained the victory. Once I was lost, and now, all glory to Sovereign Grace, I am saved. The whole world cannot deprive me of this assurance. I feel its truth in the conversion of my soul to God.

O! what a precious evidence is this. With it, the poorest, untaught believer in Jesus, may triumph in life and in death:—Without it, the richest and most learned professor of the Gospel, is destitute of its saving blessings. Gracious, indeed, are the Saviour's words: "To the poor the gospel is preached."‡ "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight."§

The Prophecies are gradually unfolded to us, like the ancient roll on which they were written. They resemble the process in the vegetable world, yielding their bud, and flower, and fruit. Like the shining light, they shine more and more unto the perfect day,‖ as we advance from the Patriarchal to the Gospel times. It is striking to observe how the prophecies respecting the nature, person, offices, and work of our Redeemer, increased in clearness and

* John xvii. 3. † John ix. 25. ‡ Luke vii. 22.
§ Luke x. 21. ‖ Prov. iv. 18.

particularity, as the time drew near when he should be manifested as "the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Our earth is the theatre on which are displayed the wonders of Redemption. Here "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."* Blessed are they who prize the sacred Scriptures, as the revelation of the grace of God; who inwardly experience their sanctifying power; and who remain unshaken by the scoffs of infidels, or the sneers of the world. Standing on this Rock of Truth, they can behold, with the assurance of hope, the predicted convulsions of the world, knowing that *their* "*redemption draweth* nigh."† To such, the Redeemer saith: "Fear not."‡

The Holy Scriptures reveal to us man's fall and his recovery. What revelation can be so important as the knowledge of salvation by Jesus Christ. O! that we may rejoice in the Lord alway, and prize above every earthly treasure, that Book which contains the purposes of his grace towards a ruined world.

When our first parents transgressed the law of their Creator, given to them as a test of their obedience, and to prove their allegiance to their Almighty Sovereign, sin entered into the world, and death by sin. God, who is love, foreseeing the fatal apostacy of his creature man, through a wilful compliance with Satan's temptation, in his wise counsel devised a remedy, which would be sufficient to save the sinner, and to glorify his own perfections.

When God pronounced the curse upon the serpent, he proclaimed salvation to the guilty pair: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."§

This was the first prophetic promise of that Saviour who was to be peculiarly the seed of the woman,‖

* Psa lxxxv. 10. † Luke xxi. 28. ‡ Matt. x. 28.; Luke xii. 32.
§ Gen. iii. 15.; Luke xxii. 53.; Col. ii. 15. ‖ Luke i. 26—31.

and by whose power the kingdom of Satan should be destroyed,* although he himself should suffer in the conflict.† Through faith in this promised Redeemer, Adam, Abel, Noah, and all the ancient Patriarchs were saved, notwithstanding their views of him must have been very obscure and limited. It was prophecy in the bud. We behold the unfolding of this first prophecy in that gracious promise made to Abraham, and afterwards confirmed to Isaac and Jacob: "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."‡ Christ is called the seed of Abraham, because he should spring lineally from him according to the flesh.§ Thus the FAMILY was now ascertained from whence the Saviour of the world should come.

The Holy Ghost, who spake by the mouth of the holy prophets since the world began, and whose office it is to glorify Christ, gave a still clearer view in the dying benediction of good old Jacob: "The sceptre (or staff of a tribe) shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver (or Judge) from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."‖ Here the very TRIBE is named, that particular branch of Jacob's family, and Abraham's posterity, which should have the honour of being the Tribe, among whom the Messiah should be born. And oh! how marvellously was this prophetic declaration of the pious patriarch fulfilled, who died in faith, exclaiming: "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord!"** During the patriarchal age, Job was upheld when passing through deep waters, by a believing view of the Redeemer: "I know that my Redeemer liveth."††

The wicked Balaam, being overruled by the Spirit of God to bless Israel, spake of Jesus as the star and the sceptre: "There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel."‡‡

* Heb. ii. 14.; 1 John iii. 8. † Matt. xx. 18, 19.
‡ Gen. xxii. 18; xxvi. 4; xxviii. 14. § Gal. iii. 16.
‖ Gen. xlix. 10. ** Gen. xlix. 18.; see Heb. vii. 14.; Rom. i. 3.
†† Job xix. 25. ‡‡ Numb. xxiv. 17.; Rev. xix. 16.

It is remarkable that a star guided the wise men from the East to Jerusalem and then to Bethlehem, where Jesus was born.—See Matt. ii.

The family and tribe being foretold, the next unfolding prophecy relates to one of the offices of the Messiah, which was declared by MOSES to the children of Israel: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a PROPHET from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken."* St Peter declared this to be prophetic of Christ.† so did Stephen.‡

DAVID, the sweet Psalmist of Israel, by the Spirit of prophecy, foretells two other important offices of Christ:

I. His kingly office. "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre."—Psa. xlv. 6.

II. His priestly office. "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."—Psa. cx. 4.

St. Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews, applies both these prophecies to Jesus Christ. — See Heb. i. 8.; vii. 17.

The Psalms abound with wonderfully minute and circumstantial prophecies of the ever-blessed Jesus. Indeed, they are full of Christ. Oh! for faith to receive them aright!

The *divine* nature of Christ is clearly asserted in Psa. cx. 1.:

"The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool;" and which our Saviour applied to himself in the presence of the unbelieving Jews.—Matt. xxii. 41—46; Acts ii. 32—36.

His *human* nature is strikingly foretold in Psa. xl. 6, 7.

"Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me."

* Deut. xviii. 15. † Acts iii. 22. ‡ Acts vii. 37, 52.

This prophecy is explained by St. Paul, as descriptive of the Messiah, who is God, manifest in the flesh.—See Heb. x. 5—10.

The offerings of the wise men, and the subsequent glories of Messiah's kingdom are predicted in Psa. lxxii.:

"The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts."—ver. 10. Matt. ii. 11.

"His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed."—ver. 17. Phil. ii. 9—11.

The grace and beauty, as well as the majesty and glory of Christ, are exquisitely displayed in Psa. xlv. 2, 3.:

"Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever."—ver. 2. Luke iv. 22.

"Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty."—ver. 3. Rev. xix. 15, 16.

The very exclamations of the multitude are foretold which accompanied our Lord into the city of Jerusalem:

"Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord! (or Hosannah.).....Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord."—Psa. cxviii. 25, 26. Matt. xxi. 9.

The zeal of Christ for his Father's house is foretold, Psa. lxix. 9.:

"The zeal of thine hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me." John ii. 17.

The sufferings and deep humiliation of Christ are most pathetically depicted by the Royal Prophet:

"They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head: they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty."—Psa. lxix. 4. John xv. 25.

"Every day they wrest my words: all their

thoughts are against me for evil. They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps, when they wait for my soul."—Psa. lvi. 5, 6. Luke xx. 20.

"Mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me."—Psa. xli. 9. John xiii. 18.

"Let his days be few: and let another take his office."—Psa. cix. 8. Acts i. 16.

"I was a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbours, and a fear to mine acquaintance: they that did see me without fled from me."—Psa. xxxi. 11. Matt. xxvi. 56.; Mark xiv. 49, 50.

"False witnesses did rise up: they laid to my charge things that I knew not."—Psa. xxxv. 11. Matt. xxvi. 59—61.

"In mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together; yea, the abjects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew it not: they did tear me, and ceased not. With hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth."—Psa. xxxv. 15, 16. Luke xxii. 63—65.

"The plowers plowed upon my back; they made long their furrows."—Psa. cxxix. 3. Matt. xxvii. 26.

"They pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me."—Psa. xxii. 16, 17. John xix. 15, 16.

"They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."—Psa. lxix. 21. Matt. xxvii. 34.

"They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture."—Psa. xxii. 18. Luke xxiii. 34.

"All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him."—Psa. xxii. 7, 8. Matt. xxvii. 41—44.

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—Psa. xxii. 1. Matt. xxvii. 46.

"Into thy hand I commit my spirit."—Psa. xxxi. 5. Luke xxiii. 46.

This description of our Lord's passion resembles a history of past events, rather than a prophecy of future transactions. All was minutely fulfilled.

Christ, as the true paschal Lamb, was offered in sacrifice to eternal justice for the sins of the world, at the feast of the Passover. The command respecting the lamb to be eaten at this season was, that a bone of it should not be broken.*

To this circumstance St. John alludes, to show that Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.†

The Resurrection of our Redeemer was foretold by David:

"My heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope: for thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption."—Psa. xvi. 9, 10. Matt. xxviii. 5, 6.; Acts ii. 24—31.

The Ascension of Christ is declared in triumphant language:

"God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises unto our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding."—Psa. xlvii. 5—7. Mark xvi. 19.; Luke xxiv. 50—53.; Acts i. 4—12.

The Victory obtained over the powers of darkness, by the crucified, risen, and ascended Jesus, is also proclaimed by the inspired Psalmist:

"Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them. Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation."—Psa. lxviii. 18, 19. Eph. iv. 7, 8.; i. 20—23.; Heb. ii. 10, 14.

* Exod. xii. 46. † John xix. 33—36.; 1 Cor. v. 7, 8.

The song of Angels, and of the Church triumphant, is recorded for the joy of faith:

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is the King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle, Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory."—Psa. xxiv. 7—10. Rev. v. 11, 12.

The Perpetuity and Glory of Christ's kingdom is predicted:

"I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth."—Psa. lxxxix. 27. Luke i. 33.

"His seed will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven."—Psa. lxxxix. 29. Rev. xi. 15.

"In thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things."—Psa. xlv. 4. Rev. vi. 2.

"I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations; therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever."—Psa. xlv. 17. Rom. ix. 5.

"Thou hast put all things under his feet."—Psa. viii. 6. 1 Cor. xv. 27.; Heb. ii. 8.

These are a few of those wonderful predictions, with which the Psalms abound, and which mark out the Messiah, and prove that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. The omniscient Jehovah, by the Spirit of prophecy in his servant David, foretold the sufferings and triumphs of the Redeemer one thousand years before their accomplishment. What, but the overruling power of the Almighty, could have so ordered the vast machine of events, that, while men were acting *freely*, and thus *responsible* for their actions, they were unwittingly fulfilling the purposes of heaven. This St. Peter most fully declared to the crucifiers of Jesus: "Ye

men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did, by him, in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the *determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*, ye have taken, and by *wicked hands* have crucified and slain."*

Let us adore the God of our salvation, and believe, in the simplicity of faith, what we cannot comprehend. "We speak," says St. Paul, "the wisdom of God in *a mystery*, even the hidden wisdom, which *God ordained before the world* unto our glory: which none of the princes of this world knew: for *had they known it*, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory."†

The period, circumstances, and mode of our Lord's death, are truly wonderful. The Lawgiver or Judge was not yet wholly departed from Judah, according to the prophecy of Jacob; for the Jews said to Pilate, "*We have a law*, and by *our law* he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God."‡ And yet they did not possess the power to put their law into execution by a civil process, as that belonged to the Roman governor. "Pilate said unto them, Take ye him, and *judge* him according to *your law*. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death."§

Here we must admire the overruling Providence of God. The punishment for blasphemy was stoning.‖ But Jesus had said: "And I, if I be *lifted up from the earth*, will draw all men unto me. This he said," adds St. John, "signifying what death he should die."**

At this critical period, when two opposite circumstances occurred,—when the Jews had a law to punish with death, and yet not sufficient civil power to put it in force; the Saviour of the world, being

* Acts ii. 22, 23. † 1 Cor. ii. 7, 8.
‡ John xix. 7. § John xviii. 31. ‖ Lev. xxiv. 16.
** John xii. 32, 33.

cused by the Jews, was condemned to be *crucified* the Roman governor. Thus was fulfilled the pro-ecy of David: "They pierced my hands and my et."*

When Stephen was accused of blasphemy, in the at of their rage the Jews cast him out of the city d stoned him: but when Jesus was to be offered as a sacrifice for sin, their wrath was restrained that Almighty power, who saith to the boisterous ave, "hitherto shalt thou go, and no further."

The more we study the Prophecies respecting the lessiah, and the events connected with them, the ore we shall be constrained to say with the con-nced centurion at the cross: "Truly this was the n of God."†

Hosea, one of the oldest prophets, who lived out eight hundred years before Christ, foretells the ght of the infant Saviour into Egypt, and his sub-quent call from thence:

"When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and lled my son out of Egypt."—xi. 1. Matt. ii. 15.

Also, his glorious Resurrection; under the em-em of a national restoration:

"After two days will he revive us: in the third y he will raise us up, and we shall live in his ght."—vi. 2. Mark viii. 31.; 1 Cor. xv. 4.

Isaiah, who prophesied about seven hundred d sixty years before Christ, has been styled the fth Evangelist, from the wonderful, rich, and glo-ous discoveries made to him of that Saviour who, the fulness of time, was to come into our world, seek and to save that which is lost.

Jesus was promised to Adam as the seed of the oman. By Isaiah the promise is confirmed:—

"Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a n, and shall call his name Immanuel."—vii. 14, ix. 1. Matt. i. 22, 23.

The Messiah is frequently foretold under the militude of a Branch:—

* Psa. xxii. 16. † Matt. xxvii. 54.

"There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots."—xi. 1. Jesus was David's son, and David's Lord. "The root and the offspring of David."—Rev. xxii. 16.

He was predicted under the figure of a Stone, to demonstrate the stability of his kingdom, and the firmness of the believer's hope:

"Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste."—xxviii. 16. 1 Pet. ii. 6.

In unison with this prophecy, David declared: "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing: it is marvellous in our eyes."—Psa. cxviii. 22, 23. Matt. xxi. 42.

How touchingly is the meekness and gentleness of Christ described:

"Behold my servant, whom I uphold, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my Spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench."—xlii. 1—3. Matt. xii. 17—21.

"He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."—xl. 11. John x. 11.; Matt. xi. 28, 30.

The blessings of the Redeemer's kingdom are beautifully pourtrayed:

"Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. And a man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of waters in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."—xxxii. 1, 2. Luke i. 68—75.

"I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of

the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house."—xlii. 6, 7. Luke ii. 29—32.; Acts xxvi. 15—18.

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek: he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."—lxi. 1, 2., xi. 2. Luke iv. 16—21.

The human and divine Nature of Christ, as God manifest in the flesh, is most plainly declared:

"Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever."—ix. 6, 7. Luke i. 32—35.

"And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."—xxv. 9. Luke i. 46, 47.

"O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!"—xl. 9., lii. 7. Rom. x. 13—15.

"Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not; behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped: then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb man sing: for in the wilderness shall waters

break out, and streams in the desert."—xxxv. 4—6. Matt. xi. 4—6.

Who can impartially compare these prophecies with their fulfilment in the Gospels, and deny that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

The humanity of Christ, being foretold, as the virgin's son, and the child given, the Prophet most pathetically describes the sufferings and death of our ever adorable Redeemer. Who can read, unmoved, the prophetic details of the Saviour's passion? They are recorded as if already past, from the certainty and truth of their fulfilment. As the willingness of Christ to suffer in our stead was mentioned by David, "I am content to do thy will, O God;"* so here the patient Jesus says: "The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting."—l. 5, 6. Matt. xxvi. 42.; John vi. 38.

The Evangelical Prophet, in the fifty-third chapter, begins with this painful exclamation:

"Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground; he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed,

* Psa. xl. 10., Prayer Book Version.

and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors: and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

O ye perishing sinners, ye prisoners of hope, behold the Man!—Zion, behold your King! Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world! Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved; for he hath said: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else."—xlv. 22.

By comparing this affecting chapter, the fifty-third of Isaiah, with the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel, it pleased God, who is rich in mercy, not many years ago, to convert a Jew to the faith of Christ. O! how precious is the word of God. Truly "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Well might the enraptured Prophet break forth into joyous strains:

"Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree

therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel."—Isa. xliv. 23. Rev. v. 13.

The Prophet MICAH, who lived about seven hundred and fifty years before Christ, points out the very place where the Messiah should be born, and with his Manhood, declares his Godhead also:

"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, *from everlasting.*"—v. 2. Matt. ii. 4—6.

His humiliation is likewise predicted:

"They shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek."—v. 1. Matt. xxvii. 30.

JEREMIAH, who prophesied about six hundred years before Christ, foretold his advent in the flesh:

"The Lord hath created a *new thing* in the earth, A woman shall compass a man."—xxxi. 22. Here Christ is evidently declared, according to the first promise, to be the seed of the woman, Luke i. 35, for the words of this prophecy imply a miraculous conception.

The cruelty of Herod is also affectingly described:

"A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children, refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not."—xxxi. 15. Matt. ii. 17, 18.

The Messiah is promised, as in Isaiah, under the similitude of a Branch:

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch; and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely, and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."—xxiii. 5, 6; xxxiii. 15, 16. Rom. xi. 26.; 1 Cor. i. 30.; 1 John ii. 1.

EZEKIEL, who is supposed to have been carried captive to Babylon with Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and who began to prophesy about five hundred and

ninety-five years before Christ, spake of him under the character of a Shepherd, and under the title of David:

"I will set up one Shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it."—xxxiv. 23, 24. John x. 14—16.

This blessed Shepherd has appeared. He now, through his Spirit and Word, feeds the souls of his chosen flock. He reigns in their hearts. He sits enthroned in their affections. He is David their prince, whose yoke is easy, and whose burden is light; yea, whose service is perfect freedom.

Ezekiel, in unfolding the prophetic roll, presents to our view a most animating, consoling view of the future glory and blessedness of God's ancient people.

Now, they are scattered and peeled; trodden under-foot, and despised; yea, a proverb of reproach and a bye-word among the nations:—Now, they are suffering the just reward of their continued rejection of Christ and his salvation. His blood is still upon them, and their children. The wrath of God is come upon them to the utermost. But, "Hath God cast away his people?"* St. Paul replies: "God forbid." A glorious period is approaching, when the riches of sovereign grace shall be displayed before an admiring world, by the restoration and conversion of the house of Israel. For, thus saith the God of Abraham: "I will make them *one nation* in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more *two nations*, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms, any more at all: neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their

* Rom. xi. 1.

dwelling-places wherein they have sinned, and I will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. And David my servant shall be king over them: and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherever *your Fathers have dwelt;* and they shall dwell therein, even they and their children, and their children's children, for ever; and *my servant David shall be their prince for ever.* Moreover, I will make my covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them; yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people."—xxxvii. 22—27.

What an overflowing of mercy is here. These precious promises, like showers of blessings, are in store, to refresh and fructify the now desolate children of Israel. How should Christians pray, that the veil may be taken away from the hearts of God's ancient people; that they may acknowledge Christ to be the Lord, their spiritual David, their promised Messiah, their almighty Saviour. Then will be realised the glorious view of the Apostle respecting the restoration and conversion of the Jews:

"If the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, *how much more their fulness?*"—Rom. xi. 12.

"If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but *life from the dead?*"—ver. 15.

"Blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so *all Israel shall be saved:* as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins."—vers. 25—27.

Blessed Jesus, take "to thee thy great power," and reign as Lord Supreme.—Rev. xi. 17. Let thy kingdom come.

DANIEL, who was carried captive with Jehoiakim to Babylon, and styled by the angel who appeared to him, "a man greatly beloved,"* told Nebuchadnezzar by divine revelation, that the kingdom of Christ would be established upon the ruins of earthly kingdoms, and should never be destroyed:

"In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, (viz., the Babylonian, Persian, Grecian, and Roman,) and it shall stand for ever," —ii. 44. Rev. xi. 15.

This great man also foretold the precise period when Messiah, the prince, should be offered up in sacrifice for the sins of the world. This period is now past, above eighteen hundred years. Hence, Jesus Christ, in whom all the prophecies meet, is proved to be the Hope of Israel. Thus wrote St. John: "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true: and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."—1 John v. 20.

Precisely at the predicted time, Messiah was cut off, but not for himself; the veil of the temple was rent in twain, signifying that the way into the holiest of all was now opened; and in about forty years afterwards, "the people of the prince,"† viz. the Roman army under Titus, came to destroy the city and the sanctuary with an overwhelming desolation. And yet, though no Messiah, as described by their prophets, has since appeared; though their second temple is destroyed; though the daily sacrifice has ceased; and though the genealogical accuracy of their tribes is lost; the Jews wilfully reject the counsel of God

* Dan. ix. 23.; x. 11, 19. † Dan. ix. 26.

against themselves, and stand among the nations, as an abiding testimony to the truth of Scripture.—Luke xxi. 24.; 1 Thess. ii. 14—16.

This is the remarkable prophecy:

"Seventy weeks (or four hundred and ninety years) are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. Know, therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and three-score and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after three-score and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined."—ix. 24—27. Gal. iv. 4—6.; John xviii. 14.; 1 Pet. iii. 18.

The Messiah himself, just before his crucifixion, prophetically enlarged upon the miseries of the Jewish people. And with wonderful compassion exclaimed: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."—Matt. xxiii. 37, 38.

Who can read the fulfilment of these awful prophecies of Daniel and of Christ, as recorded by Josephus the Jewish historian, who was himself an eye-witness of the horrors which he relates; and not feel convinced that Jesus is the Prophet foretold by Moses, the Priest and King predicted by David, the Messiah described by Daniel. He came unto his own, and his own received him not; therefore, the threatening pronounced by the Almighty to Moses, was

executed upon them: "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, *I will require it of him*."—Deut. xviii. 18, 19.

This threatening is still in force. "He that believeth not, shall be damned."* The words are of universal extent: "WHOSOEVER will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him." Oh! that infidels may hear and tremble.

HAGGAI, who by the command of God exhorted the Jews, after their return from the captivity, to finish the rebuilding of the Temple, which had been interrupted for several years, foretold its peculiar glory above the Temple of Solomon.

This might appear strange when we read that, "Many of the priests and Levites, and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice."† But the Prophet, speaking in the name of the Lord, explains his meaning:

"I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts." "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts."—ii. 7, 9. Heb. xii. 26—29.

This was fulfilled, when our Lord said to the Jews: "I say unto you, that in this place is one greater than the temple."—Matt. xii. 6. "Behold, a greater than Solomon is here."—Matt. xii. 42.

ZECHARIAH, who returned from Babylon with Zerubbabel, speaks of Christ, in unison with Isaiah, and Jeremiah, as the Branch:

* Mark xvi. 16. † Ezra iii. 12.

"Behold, I will bring forth my servant, THE BRANCH."—iii. 8.

"Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is the BRANCH: and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord: even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both."—vi. 12, 13. See Luke i. 78, where day-spring is rendered *branch*. Marg. reading. —Eph. ii. 20—22.

The entrance of Christ into Jerusalem is foretold:

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."—ix. 9. Matt. xxi. 1—7.

"He shall speak peace unto the heathen; and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth."—ix. 10. Mark xvi. 15.

The very sum is mentioned for which Judas betrayed the Saviour; as also the manner in which it should be disposed of:

"I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord."—xi. 12, 13. Matt. xxvi. 14—16., xxvii. 3—10.; Acts i. 16—19.

The nature of our Lord's death is predicted:

"I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have *pierced*, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall

be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born."—xii. 10. John xix. 37.; Rev. i. 7.

"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered."—xiii. 7. Mark xiv. 27.

The saving benefits of the death of Christ are foretold:

"In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness."—xiii. 1. Heb. ix. 14.; 1 Pet. i. 19.; Rev. i. 5.

The universal spread of genuine religion is mercifully revealed:

"In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem, and in Judah, shall be Holiness unto the Lord of hosts."—xiv. 20, 21. 1 Pet. i. 15, 16., ii. 9.

The last of the Prophets is MALACHI, who prophesied respecting the glorious Advent of Christ, about four hundred years before his appearance in the flesh, and which closes the sacred volume of the Old Testament:

"Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in; behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap. And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver;.....that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness."—iii. 1—3. Matt. iii. 11, 12.; Mark i. 1, 2.

As by the Prophet Isaiah, John the Baptist was foretold as "the voice of one crying in the wilderness," Isa. xl. 3.; Mark i. 3.; so, by Malachi, he is

predicted under the character of Elijah: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."—iv. 5, 6.

This prophetic declaration, the angel mentioned to Zacharias the father of John.—Luke i. 13—17. And our Lord also applied this prophecy to John the Baptist.—Matt. xi. 14.

How delightfully precious is this closing promise of the manifestation of Christ: "Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall."—iv. 2. Eph. v. 14.

Oh! thou adorable Redeemer, how blessed are they who fear thy name; who believe with the heart unto righteousness; who love thee above all created things! How precious is thy holy word. Enable me, rightly to understand its truths, to practice its precepts, to delight in its promises, to study its prophecies, that my faith in thee may be confirmed, and strengthened, to resist the attacks of the infidel, the raillery of the profane, the machinations of Satan, the deceitfulness of sin, the allurements of the world, the fear of man, the corruption of my heart.

How wonderful are the revelations vouchsafed to thine ancient church, respecting thy nature and person, thy offices and miracles, thy life and doctrine, thy sufferings and death, thy resurrection and ascension, thy exaltation and glorification. In the Prophecies, as in a glass, I behold thy power and grace. Like the radii of a circle, they all meet in thee, the glorious centre. May I, by faith, ever behold thee as God manifest in the flesh, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. May I ever receive thee as the one Mediator between God and man, as the Repairer of the breach, the sinner's Refuge, Atonement, Righteousness, and Hope of glory.—Lord give me a contrite, believing, loving, obedient,

hankful heart. Pour down upon me, in mercy, thy ew covenant blessings. Enlarge the borders of thy ingdom, till thou art known, and loved, and obeyed every region and under every clime, wherever there a human creature to hear the glad tidings of thy race. Let thy word run and be glorified, by the onversion of the world unto Thee!

"Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, ho only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be is glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth e filled with his glory. Amen, and amen."*

Ye sacred heralds of eternal peace,
Lift up your voice, proclaim the Saviour near;
O let your sweet employment never cease,
The drooping heart with gladsome news to cheer,
To guide the trembling soul to Jesus Christ.

Young Christian, see, the harvest fields are white,
But where, alas! are labourers to be found?
Can you refrain from tears at such a sight,
When thousands perish in their sins around?
O seek to lead them to the Saviour Christ.

Thou faithful herald of a Saviour's love,
Thy feet, on mountains, beautiful appear;
Where'er thou tread'st, like Eden's sacred grove,
The dreary wastes a smiling aspect wear,
The Gentiles turn with joy to Jesus Christ.

Burning with love, the faithful man of God,
Strong in his faith,—despising grief and shame,
Smiles at the power of persecution's rod,
Unfurls the banners in a Saviour's name,
And breaks the idol at the Cross of Christ.

O sacred war! behold the captive sings,
In willing bonds to thy all-conquering might;
Thou Victor of the world, and all its kings,
Enrob'd in glory's everlasting light,
Each soul shall know that THOU alone art Christ.

* Psa. lxxii. 18, 19.

LVI.—THE PROPHECIES OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, AND THEIR FULFILMENT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, CHRONOLOGICALLY ARRANGED.

"When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."—Gal. iv. 4, 5.

As it is interesting to search for Christ in the ancient prophecies, according to his own command; so is it highly confirmatory of our faith, to behold their wonderful accomplishment in the writings of the Apostles and Evangelists.

It will, therefore, be useful to place the Prophecy and its Fulfilment in juxtaposition; and while beholding the Wisdom and Power of God, in so minutely fulfilling the purposes of his love, we shall exclaim with the joy of Philip: "We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."*

PROPHECY.—"The Lord God said unto the serpent,.....I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."—Gen. iii. 14, 15.

"The Lord hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man."—Jer. xxxi. 22.

"Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from afar; The Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name."—Isa. xlix. 1.

"Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoul-

* John i. 45.

der; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."—Isa. ix. 6, 7.

FULFILMENT.—"In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God, unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured.....Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."—Luke i. 26—35.

PROPHECY.—"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign: Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."—Isa. vii. 14.

FULFILMENT.—"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her

away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel; which being interpreted, is, God with us."—Matt. i. 18—23.

PROPHECY.—"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."—Micah v. 2.

"And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots."—Isa. xi. 1.

FULFILMENT.—"And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.....And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, (because he was of the house and lineage of David,) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn."—Luke ii. 1—7.

PROPHECY.—"Sing, O ye *heavens*; for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the

earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel."—Isa. xliv. 23.

FULFILMENT.—"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.... And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."—Luke ii. 8—14.

PROPHECY.—"And now, saith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength. And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for *a light to the Gentiles*, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth."—Isa. xlix. 5, 6.

FULFILMENT.—"And when the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord.....And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the

law, then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation. Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people: *a light to lighten the Gentiles*, and the glory of thy people Israel."—Luke ii. 22—32.

PROPHECY.—"I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel."—Numb. xxiv. 17.

FULFILMENT.—"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet; And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a governor, that shall rule my people Israel."—Matt. ii. 1—6.

PROPHECY.—"The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him."—Psa. lxxii. 10, 11.

"All they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall show forth the praises of the Lord."—Isa. lx. 6.

"The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising."—Isa. lx. 3.

"In that day there shall be a root of Jesse,

hich shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it
all the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious."
-Isa. xi. 10.

FULFILMENT.—"The star, which they saw in
ie east, went before them, till it came and stood
ver where the young child was. When they saw
ie star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.
nd when they were come into the house, they saw
ie young child with Mary his mother, and fell down,
id worshipped him: and when they had opened
ieir treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold,
id frankincense, and myrrh."—Matt. ii. 9—11.

PROPHECY.—"When Israel was a child, then I
ved him, and called my son out of Egypt."—
Iosea xi. 1.

FULFILMENT.—"Behold, the angel of the Lord
ppeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and
ke the young child and his mother, and flee into
gypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word:
r Herod will seek the young child, to destroy him.
Vhen he arose, he took the young child and his
other by night, and departed into Egypt: and was
iere until the death of Herod, that it might be
lfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the pro-
het, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son."
-Matt. ii. 13—15.

PROPHECY.—"A voice was heard in Ramah,
mentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for
er children, refused to be comforted for her children,
ecause they were not."—Jer. xxxi. 15.

FULFILMENT.—"Then Herod, when he saw
iat he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding
roth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that
ere in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from
vo years old and under, according to the time which
e had diligently enquired of the wise men. Then
as fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the
rophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard,

lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not."—Matt. ii. 16—18.

PROPHECY.—"The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord."—Isa xi. 2.

FULFILMENT.—"The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him."—Luke ii. 40.

"All that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers."—Luke ii. 47.

"And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."—Luke ii. 52.

PROPHECY.—"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a high-way for our God."—Isa. xl. 3.

"Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me."—Mal. iii. 1.

FULFILMENT.—"And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?.....He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias."—John i. 19—23. See Matt. iii. 1—3.; Luke i. 76—78.; Matt. xi. 10.

"As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee."—Mark i. 2.

PROPHECY.—"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."—Mal. iv. 5, 6.

FULFILMENT.—"And the disciples asked Jesus,

saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come? And he answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things.....I say unto you, That Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him."—Mark ix. 11—13.

"If ye will receive it, this is Elias which was for to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."—Matt. xi. 14, 15. See Matt. xvii. 12, 13.

"The angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.....And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."—Luke i. 13, 16, 17.

PROPHECY.—"The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap. And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness."—Mal. iii. 1—3.

FULFILMENT.—"And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ or not; John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptise you with water; but one mighter than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his

garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable."—Luke iii. 15—17.

PROPHECY.—"Behold my servant, whom I uphold, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my spirit upon him."—Isa. xlii. 1.

FULFILMENT.—"And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptised of John in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him: and there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."—Mark i. 9—11.

"God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him."—John iii. 34.

PROPHECY.—"Say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!"—Isa. xl. 9.

"Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."—Isa. xxv. 9.

FULFILMENT.—"The next day, John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me."—John i. 29, 30.

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us, in the house of his servant David; as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began."—Luke i. 68—70.

PROPHECY.—"Nevertheless, the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict

her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined."—Isa. ix. 1, 2.

FULFILMENT.—"Leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, (a city of Galilee,*) which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light: and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up."—Matt. iv. 13—16.

PROPHECY.—"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek: he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."—Isa. lxi. 1, 2.

FULFILMENT.—"He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath-day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.....And he began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears."—Luke iv. 16—21.

* Luke iv. 31.

PROPHECY.—"In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed."—Dan. ii. 44.

FULFILMENT.—"Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel."—Mark i. 14, 15.

"As ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand."—Matt. x. 7.

"The gates of hell shall not prevail against it."—Matt. xvi. 18.

PROPHECY.—"Behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped: then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing."—Isa. xxxv. 4—6.

FULFILMENT.—"John calling unto him two of his disciples, sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? And in the same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight. Then Jesus, answering, said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me."—Luke vii. 19—23. See also Matt. xv. 30, 31.

PROPHECY.—"Behold my servant, whom I uphold, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift

up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth."—Isa. xlii. 1—3.

"And the isles shall wait for his law."—Isa. xlii. 4.

FULFILMENT.—"Great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all; and charged them that they should not make him known: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust."—Matt. xii. 15—21.

PROPHECY.—"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows."—Isa. liii. 4.

FULFILMENT.—"When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses."—Matt. viii. 16, 17.

PROPHECY.—"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."—Zech. ix. 9.

"Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord! (or Hosannah.).....Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord."—Psa. cxviii. 25, 26.

FULFILMENT.—"And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the

Mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, saying unto them, Go into the village over-against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me..... All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.....And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to to the Son of David! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!"—Matt. xxi. 1—9.

PROPHECY.—"Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength, because of thine enemies; that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger."—Psa. viii. 2.

FULFILMENT.—"When the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David! they were sore displeased, and said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea: have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?"—Matt. xxi. 15, 16.

PROPHECY.—"The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up."—Psa. lxix. 9.

FULFILMENT.—"Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: and when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up."—John ii. 13—17.

PROPHECY.—"The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes."—Psa. cxviii. 22, 23.

"And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken."—Isa. viii. 15.

"It shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."—Dan. ii. 44.

FULFILMENT.—"And he beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."—Luke xx. 17, 18. See Matt. xxi. 42—44.

PROPHECY.—"I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old."—Psa. lxxviii. 2.

FULFILMENT.—"All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world."—Matt. xiii. 34, 35.

PROPHECY.—"The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken."—Deut. xviii. 15.

FULFILMENT.—"And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto the, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother. And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people."—Luke vii. 14—16.

"Many of the people,.....when they heard this

saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet."—John vii. 40.

"This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world."—John vi. 14.

PROPHECY.—"The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary."—Isa. l. 4.

FULFILMENT.—"All bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth."—Luke iv. 22.

"Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him? The officers answered, Never man spake like this man."—John vii. 45, 46.

"Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."—Matt. xi. 28.

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace."—John xvi. 33.; John xv. 11.

PROPHECY.—"They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head: they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty."—Psa. lxix. 4.

FULFILMENT.—"If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause."—John xv. 24, 25.

PROPHECY.—"Every day they wrest my words: all their thoughts are against me for evil. They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps, when they wait for my soul."—Psa. lvi. 5, 6.

FULFILMENT.—"Then went the Pharisees, and

took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk."—Matt. xxii. 15.

"After these things, Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him."—John vii. 1.

PROPHECY.—"I will set up one Shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it."—Ezek. xxxiv. 23, 24.; xxxvii. 24.

"For thus saith the Lord God, Behold I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out."—Ezek. xxxiv. 11.

FULFILMENT.—"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."—John x. 11.

"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."—John x. 16.

"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."—Luke xix. 10.

PROPHECY.—"After three-score and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself."—Dan. ix. 26.

"He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities."—Isa. liii. 5.

"For the transgression of my people was he stricken."—Isa. liii. 8.

"The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."—Isa. liii. 6.

FULFILMENT.—"Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that

Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death."—John xi. 49—53.

PROPHECY.—"They weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver."—Zech. xi. 12.

"Mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me."—Psa. xli. 9.

FULFILMENT.—"Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver."—Matt. xxvi. 14, 15.

"Now when even was come, he sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me..... Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said."—Matt. xxvi. 20, 21, 25.

"I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me, hath lifted up his heel against me."—John xiii. 18.

PROPHECY.—"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered."—Zech. xiii. 7.

FULFILMENT.—Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad."—Matt. xxvi. 31.

PROPHECY.—"My heart is sore pained within me; and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me."—Psa. lv. 4, 5.

FULFILMENT.—"Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane,.....and began to be very sorrowful (sore amazed,*) and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death."—Matt. xxvi. 36—38.

"And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."—Luke xxii. 44.

PROPHECY.—"He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him; he hath broken his covenant. The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords."—Psa. lv. 20, 21.

FULFILMENT.—"Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude, with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, Master; and kissed him."—Matt. xxvi. 47—49.

PROPHECY.—"I was a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbours, and a fear to mine acquaintance: they that did see me without fled from me."—Psa. xxxi. 11.

"My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off. They also that seek after my life lay snares for me: and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long."—Psa. xxxviii. 11, 12.

FULFILMENT.—"All this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled."—Matt. xxvi. 56.

"And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled."—Matt. xxvi. 57.

* Mark xiv. 33.

PROPHECY.—"False witnesses did rise up: they laid to my charge things that I knew not."—Psa. xxxv. 11.

"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth."—Isa. liii. 7.

"I, as a deaf man, heard not; and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth. Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs."—Psa. xxxviii. 13, 14.

FULFILMENT.—"Now the chief priests and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; but found none. .....At the last came two false witnesses, and said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days. And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing?.....But Jesus held his peace."—Matt. xxvi. 59—63.

"Then saith Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee? And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly."—Matt. xxvii. 13, 14.

PROPHECY.—"In mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together; yea, the abjects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew it not; they did tear me, and ceased not. With hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth."—Psa. xxxv. 15, 16.

"I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting."—Isa. l. 6.

FULFILMENT.—"And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him. And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophesy, who is it that smote thee? And many other things blasphemously spake they against him."—Luke xxii. 63—65.

"Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted n; and others smote him with the palms of their nds."—Matt. xxvi. 67.

PROPHECY.—"They shall smite the judge of rael with a rod upon the cheek."—Micah v. 1.

"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of rrows, and acquainted with grief."—Isa. liii. 3.

FULFILMENT.—"When they had platted a own of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a ed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee fore him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of e Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the ed, and smote him on the head."—Matt. xxvii.), 30.

PROPHECY.—"The plowers plowed upon my ack; they made long their furrows.—Psa. cxxix. 3.

FULFILMENT.—"Then Pilate therefore took esus, and scourged him."—John xix. i.

PROPHECY.—"The sceptre shall not depart from udah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until hiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of ie people be."—Gen. xlix. 10.

FULFILMENT.—"Pilate saith unto them, Take e him and crucify him; for I find no fault in him. he Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our w he ought to die, because he made himself the Son f God."—John xix. 6, 7.

"Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and dge him according to your law. The Jews there- re said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any an to death: that the saying of Jesus might be lfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he ould die."—John xviii. 31, 32.

PROPHECY.—"And I said unto them, If ye ink good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. o they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver.

And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord."—Zech. xi. 12, 13.

FULFILMENT.—"Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? See thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day. (Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.")—Matt. xxvii. 3—10.

PROPHECY.—"He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."—Isa. liii. 12.

FULFILMENT.—"Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."—Luke xxiii. 34.

PROPHECY.—"He was numbered with the transgressors."—Isa. liii. 12.

FULFILMENT.—"And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, the other on his left. And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors."—Mark xv. 27, 28.

PROPHECY.—"They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture."—Psa. xxii. 18.

FULFILMENT.—"Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout: they said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots."—John xix. 23, 24.; Matt. xxvii. 35.

PROPHECY.—"They pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me."—Psa. xxii. 16, 17.

FULFILMENT.—"And it was the third hour; and they crucified him."—Mark xv. 25.

PROPHECY.—"The gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."—Psa. lxix. 21.

FULFILMENT.—"Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth."—John xix. 28, 29.

"When they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, A place of a skull, they gave him vinegar to drink, mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink."—Matt. xxvii. 33, 34.

PROPHECY.—"All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him."—Psa. xxii. 7, 8.

FULFILMENT.—"And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying,.....If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross

.....The chief priests mocking him,.....said, he trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God."—Matt. xxvii. 39—43.

PROPHECY.—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—Psa. xxii. 1.

FULFILMENT.—"About the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—Matt. xxvii. 46.

PROPHECY.—"Into thine hand I commit my spirit."—Psa. xxxi. 5.

FULFILMENT.—"And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost."—Luke xxiii. 46.

PROPHECY.—"He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken."—Psa. xxxiv. 20.

"Neither shall ye break a bone thereof."—Exod. xii. 46.

"They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn."—Zech. xii. 10.

FULFILMENT.—"Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water.....These things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced."—John xix. 32—37.

PROPHECY.—"He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death."—Isa. liii. 9.

FULFILMENT.—"When the even was come, there

came a rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple. He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus.....And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb."—Matt. xxvii. 57—60.

PROPHECY.—"My heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope: for thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption."—Psa. xvi. 9, 10.

"When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied."—Isa. liii. 10, 11.

"After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight."—Hosea vi. 2.

FULFILMENT.—"Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: and, as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered his words."—Luke xxiv. 1—8.

"Jesus showed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."—Acts i. 3.

PROPHECY.—Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands: thou hast put all things under his feet."—Psa. viii. 6.

FULFILMENT.—"Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."—Matt. xxviii. 18.

PROPHECY.—"God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises unto our King, sing praises."—Psa. xlvii. 5, 6.

"Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."—Psa. lxviii. 18.

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of Glory."—Psa. xxiv. 7—10.

FULFILMENT.—"And he led them out as far as to Bethany; and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven."—Luke xxiv. 50, 51.

"And sat on the right hand of God."—Mark xvi. 19.

"And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven, as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."—Acts i. 10, 11.

"And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and were continually in

the temple, praising and blessing God."—Luke xxiv. 52, 53.

PROPHECY.—"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit."—Joel ii. 28, 29.

"And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered."—Joel ii. 32.

FULFILMENT.—"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them: and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.....Peter, standing up with the eleven, lift up his voice, and said unto them,.....This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: and it shall come to pass in the last days, (saith God,) I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out, in those days, of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: .....and it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved."—Acts ii. 1—4, 14—21.

PROPHECY.—"Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?"—Isa. lx. 8.

"A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time."—Isa. lx. 22.

FULFILMENT.—"Then they that gladly received his word were baptised: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."—Acts ii. 41, 42.

PROPHECY.—"I will give them *one heart*, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them."—Jer. xxxii. 39.

"I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory."—Isa. xlvi. 13.

"It shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem.....And the Lord shall be king all over the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one."—Zech. xiv. 8, 9.

FULFILMENT.—"And they, continuing daily with *one accord* in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and *singleness of heart*, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."—Acts ii. 46, 47.

"Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen."—1 Tim. i. 17.

"He must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet."—1 Cor. xv. 25.

"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name. That at the name of JESUS every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."—Phil. ii. 9—11.

Truly Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, one with the Father; the Redeemer of the world. All who believe in him shall be saved. His command to the Jews was, "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."*

After his resurrection, when walking with the two disciples to Emmaus, he began "at Moses, and all the prophets, and expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."†

When he appeared to his eleven disciples, "he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."‡

Blessed Jesus, enlighten the eyes of my understanding, that I may behold thee in all the fulness of thy glory, as "the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."§ May I receive thee, with joyful heart, as my only Saviour; love thee as my Almighty Friend; and obey thee, as my Sovereign Lord.

O! give me grace to prize that blessed volume more and more, which reveals Thee to my soul, as my Atonement, Righteousness, Purifier, and Intercessor. Suffer not the scoffs of the infidel, or the sneers of the worldly, to shake my faith in Thee. Preserve me from the lying suggestions of Satan, and the inward workings of indwelling sin. Give me to know Thee, through the teaching of thy Spirit, that, being transformed into thine image, and made conformable to

* John v. 39. † Luke xxiv. 27. ‡ Luke xxiv. 44—47.
§ John i. 14.

thy will, I may, when called out of the body, l
glorified with thy glory, and be for ever happy in th
love.

"I love the sacred Book of God,
No other can its place supply;
It points me to the saints' abode,
It gives me wings, and bids me fly.

"Sweet Book! in which my eyes discern
The image of my absent Lord;
From thine instructive page I learn,
The joys His presence will afford.

"In thee, I read my title clear,
To mansions that will ne'er decay;
My Lord! oh! when will He appear,
And bear his prisoner far away.

"Then shall I need thy light no more
To show me whom I have believ'd;
When I have reach'd the heavenly shore,
The Lord Himself will stand reveal'd.

"When 'midst the throng celestial plac'd,
The bright ORIGINAL I see,
From which the sacred page was trac'd,
Sweet book!—I 've no more need of thee.

"But while I 'm here, thou shalt supply
His place, and tell me of his love:
I 'll read with Faith's discerning eye,
And get a taste of joys above."

LVII.—EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION.

"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."—2 Tim. i. 12.

To talk about Christian Experience is, by some persons considered little short of enthusiasm. To try to enlist the affections on the side of Christianity is by others deemed extravagance. In their view, the sober-minded Christian is one who attends to the duties of his station, is a strict observer of religious ordinances, and distributes of his substance to the poor and needy. To speak to them about the corruption of the heart, the inward conflict, the power of faith, the energy of love, the work of the Spirit, the grace of the Saviour, is like talking about an unknown region.

It was not so with the blessed Paul. He could say, "I know whom I have believed." He was taught of God to know, by sweet experience, the efficacy of Christ's atonement, the sufficiency of his grace, and the prevalency of his intercession. His ardent desire was "to know Christ, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means he might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."*

St. John also, being taught of God, was well acquainted with spiritual knowledge and religious experience. His first epistle abounds with the most delightful proofs of this. He seems to rise, as he writes, on the wings of an assured faith and hope:—

"Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things."—ii. 20.

"We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."—iii. 2.

* Phil. iii. 10, 11.

"Ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins."—iii. 5.

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."—iii. 14.

"We know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us."—iii. 24.

"Every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God."—iv. 7.

"Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit."—iv. 13.

"We have known and believed the love that God hath to us."—iv. 16.

"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments."—v. 2.

"If we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."—v. 15.

"We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not."—v. 18.

"We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness."—v. 19.

"We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true: and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."—v. 20.

O! what a blessed knowledge is this. How deeply it enters into the experience and feelings of true believers. Here is nothing cold and calculating, nothing frozen or formal, all is warmth and energy. Happy are they who can say with Peter: "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."* With John: "We love him, because he first loved us."† And with Paul: "The love of Christ constraineth us."‡

With such declarations of the Apostles, recorded in the Sacred Scriptures for our encouragement and

* John xxi. 17. † 1 John iv. 19. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 14.

pursuit after holiness, we need not be ashamed of *Experimental Religion*. The world's shame is the Christian's glory. Such was Paul's triumph. "I am not *ashamed* of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth."* "God forbid that I should *glory*, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."†

They know little of the religion of Jesus Christ, who cannot follow him through evil report as well as good report; who cannot deny themselves or take up their cross, bearing his reproach. "If we deny him, he also will deny us."‡ The fear of man, and the love of the world, are the bane of our profession, and the ruin of thousands.

The words of our Lord should be impressed on the hearts of all his followers: "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent."§ So deeply did the Apostles enter into the intercessory prayer of their divine Master, that their hearts' desire was, that the knowledge of Christ crucified should become universal.

St. Paul prays for the Ephesian converts, that the blessings of spiritual illumination, spiritual strength, and faith and love, might be imparted in rich abundance. I "cease not," says he, "to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe."‖ If this be not experimental godliness, where is it to be found?

But the tender-hearted Apostle does not rest here. He still prays, on his bended knees, for an increased

* Rom. i. 16. † Gal. vi. 14. ‡ 2 Tim. ii. 12.
§ John xvii. 3. ‖ Eph. i. 16—19.

outpouring of the Spirit upon his beloved children in the faith: "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that he might be filled with all the fulness of God."*

For the Philippians, he prays in the sweetest spirit of ministerial affection: "God is my record, how greatly I long after you all *in the bowels of Jesus Christ*. And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God."†

For the Colossians, he has the same overflowing tenderness of desire: I "do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."‡

For the Thessalonians, he also pours out his heart before God: "The Lord make you to increase

* Eph. iii. 14—19. † Phil. i. 8—11. ‡ Col. i. 9—14.

and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: to the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints."*

Let a minister of the gospel pray and preach in this fervent, exalted, spiritual, heavenly strain, and he would be branded by many, yea, it is to be feared even by *some* who call themselves "the successors of the Apostles," as an enthusiast. Would holy Paul have escaped such a censure, had he lived in these days? Is there no danger, lest spiritual religion be not once more buried beneath the superincumbent weight of those errors and idle ceremonies, from which we were happily delivered by our martyred Reformers?

There is in all men, naturally, a thirst for power. Every age has its "Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence,.....prating against us," saith St. John, "with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church."†

What is the advice of the Apostle to such holy, yet excommunicated believers? "Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doth evil hath not seen God."‡

The Christian's path then is plainly marked out. He is to take up his cross daily. He is to count the cost. If he be faithful to his Saviour, he must be a partaker of his Saviour's sufferings; so said our Lord: "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you."§

It is a painful truth, but one which cannot be concealed, because it is emblazoned in colours of blood on the page of Scripture, and on the page of the Church's history, that the greatest persecutors of

* 1 Thess. iii. 12, 13. † 3 John 9, 10. ‡ 3 John 11.
§ John xv. 20.

Christ, and of his *true* believing members, have been those who have sat in the seat of Moses, and in the chair of St. Peter! Who were so clamorous for the crucifixion of our Lord, as the chief priests, the scribes, and elders of the Jewish Church? Who, in after ages, were so bitter against the sheep of Christ, as those very ministers of the Christian Church who styled themselves *Shepherds*, but who were ravening wolves. Jesus cautioned his people against such characters, whether Jewish or Christian: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves: ye shall know them by their fruits."*

St. Paul foresaw, by the spirit of prophecy, the approaching apostacy: "Take heed," said he, addressing the elders of the Ephesian church at Miletus, "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I *know this*, that after my departing shall *grievous wolves* enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of *your ownselves* shall men arise, speaking *perverse things*, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore WATCH."†

Yes! we have need to "watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation;"‡ lest we forsake the standard of the cross, through the influence or the fear of man. The times are indeed fearful, when those, who once stood foremost in the cause of Christ, who were valiant for the truth on the earth, now desert his standard: when those, who once preached, in all its simplicity and purity, the gospel of the grace of God, are now drawn into the vortex of a system, which will disfigure our Reformed Churches by Papal ceremonies, and darken them by Papal doctrines. Is it not portentous of evil days, when sacraments are *virtually* put in the place of Christ?

* Matt. vii. 15, 16. † Acts xx. 28—31.

‡ Mark xiv. 38.

When the doctrine of the atonement is to be *sparingly* exhibited to the perishing sinner? When the rights of conscience are made to *succumb* at the feet of an assumed infallibility? When the foundations are thus destroyed, what must the righteous do?

Truly this was not the preaching of the Apostles. Paul "determined not to know any thing,.....save Jesus Christ, and him *crucified*."* Peter gloried in the Lamb, who redeemed us *by his blood*.† John gives us the song of the church triumphant in heaven: "Worthy is the Lamb that was *slain* to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."‡

Neither was this the conduct of the Apostles.

Paul says to the Corinthian Christians, "Not for that we have *dominion over your faith*, but are *helpers of your joy*: for by faith ye stand."§

Peter exhorts the elders to diligence and *humility*: "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being *lords* over God's heritage, but being *ensamples* to the flock."‖

John asserts the right of private judgment: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but *try* the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."** And by what touchstone must they be tried? Isaiah informs us, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not *according to this word*, it is because there is *no light in them*."†† While we *have the light*, may we have grace to walk in the light, and with the noble Bereans, to search the Scriptures daily, whether these things are so.‡‡ An awful delusion, a spiritual darkness, is rapidly over-spreading the Reformed Churches. "Is there not a cause," when apostate

* 1 Cor. ii. 2. † 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. ‡ Rev. v. 12.
§ 2 Cor. i. 24. ‖ 1 Pet. v. 2, 3. ** 1 John iv. 1.
†† Isa. viii. 20. ‡‡ Acts xvii. 11.

Rome is viewed as an "erring sister," as "the Saviour's holy home," instead of the mystical Babylon doomed to destruction.

The judgments of God are evidently lowering over our land. The dark clouds are gathering around us. We have long been blessed with the light of the Gospel, but if we repent not, the candlestick will be removed from us, and carried to other lands. Our God is the same unchangeable Jehovah. In his word, he has taught us to dread declension from his ways. How awakening are his warnings. "If ye will not be *reformed* by me,.....but will walk contrary unto me; then will I also walk contrary unto you."* "I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.† "I will kill her children with death; and *all the churches* shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works."‡ "Remember how thou hast *received* and heard; and *hold fast*, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know *what hour* I will come upon thee."§

The signs of the times indicate the coming storm. Have we not reason to say with St. Peter, "*The time is come* that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it *first begin at us*, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in *well-doing*, as unto a faithful Creator."‖ The storm, which overwhelms the wicked, will purify the saints of God.

O! solemn warnings of most just judgment! Lord awaken our slumbering souls; enlighten our darkened understandings; preserve thy Church from

* Lev. xxvi. 23, 24. † Rev. ii. 16. ‡ Rev. ii. 23.
§ Rev. iii. 3. ‖ 1 Pet. iv. 17—19.

heresy and error; suffer not the champions for thy truth to become, "as when a *standard-bearer fainteth.*"*

The deliverance and journeyings of the children of Israel, form a striking counterpart to the Christian's redemption and pilgrimage to the heavenly Canaan.

They were held in bondage by the Egyptian tyrant, and though they groaned under their oppression, yet were loath to leave the iron furnace.

Sinners are kept in awful slavery to Satan and their lusts; and though often wretched to the last degree, still they hug their chains.

The Almighty, by an act of grace, undertook to rescue his people from the power of Pharaoh, by signs, and wonders, and with a stretched-out arm.

Sinners are redeemed from the tyranny of Satan, from the evil of sin, the curse of the law, and the damnation of hell, by the omnipotent Jehovah Jesus, God manifest in the flesh.

As the Israelites sang the praises of God, when, having passed through the Red Sea in safety, they saw their enemies dead on the shore; so believers rejoice with joy unspeakable, when they experience a mighty deliverance from all their enemies, whom the Lord subdues before them. In heaven they will sing the conqueror's song; the song of Moses and of the Lamb.

The Israelites, before they could enter into the promised rest, had to traverse a long howling wilderness, that their faith and patience might be exercised, and the power, love, and faithfulness of God, exhibited in their preservation and protection.

Believers in Jesus, after their conversion to God, and regeneration through the Spirit, have to journey through the vale of life, amidst numberless trials and difficulties, snares and temptations, before they enter the heavenly rest, to prove the reality of their faith, and to manifest the grace of their crucified Lord.

* Isa. x. 18.

The history of the Israelites in the wilderness, is the history of the human heart. We see in them a faithful picture of ourselves. When all is shining and pleasant, our hearts can feel elated and joyous. When the purse is heavy, the heart is light; but when the purse is light, the heart is heavy. Thus it was with the children of Israel. So long as their outward comforts continued, they were thankful: but when their bread and water began to fail, they murmured against Moses, and rebelled against God.

Is it not thus with us? When our sun is overcast, when storms arise, when comforts fail, when earthly sources of delight are dried up: then sadness seizes upon our spirits; doubts and fears prevail; murmurs escape our lips. In these trying seasons, the faith, even of believers, *falters;* while the faith of the stony ground hearers, having no root, withers! How destructive is unbelief! How deceiving is the confidence of nominal Christians. "Every branch *in me*," said our Lord, "that *beareth not fruit* he taketh away."* It is a fearful truth, one which should make us tremble, that out of the many thousands of Israelites who came out of Egypt, only *two* were found faithful, and permitted to enter the promised land: all the rest were excluded through unbelief.†

St. Paul applies this fact most forcibly to the Christian Church: "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end."‡ Then, referring to the rebellious Israelites, he adds, "With whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcases fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they

* John xv. 2. † See Numb. xiv. 28—38.

‡ Heb. iii. 12—14.

should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in *because of unbelief*."*

The practical conclusion is then drawn from these solemn premises, "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it."†

The visible Church of Christ, like the Church in the wilderness, is composed of a mixed multitude. All men have not faith. Many have the form of godliness, who deny the power. Many say, The temple of the Lord are we, in whose hearts the Saviour never dwelt; and who shall never enter into the temple above. Self-deception is no less common, than it is fatal.

The Jewish priests prided themselves on being the children of Abraham; when our Lord plainly told them that they were the seed of the old serpent‡ Is not the same delusion still practised? Do not the priests of the Romish Church boast themselves on being the successors of St. Peter, though they would persecute, even unto death, those who faithfully adhere to the doctrines, and live in the spirit, of the holy Apostles? The history of their Church is written in letters of blood. The power, and not the will is wanting, to root out the *heretical* tares, to gather them in *bundles*, as in the days of the Marian persecution, and to burn them!

O! that this leaven of self-deception may never work fatally in our Reformed Churches. The subtle enemy of mankind is ever seeking to darken, if he cannot destroy, the TRUTH. He can transform himself into an angel of light, as well as assume the character of a roaring lion.§ Nay, he often combines both, in his warfare against the Church of Christ.

* Heb. iii. 17—19. † Heb. iv. 1, 2. ‡ John viii. 39—44.
§ 2 Cor. xi. 14.; 1 Pet. v. 8.

Popery is the master-piece of Satan, which can adapt itself to every state of society. It is the religion of the natural heart. Lord! save me from unbelief,—self-deceptions,—Satan's delusions,—and the fear of man.

I am now a pilgrim journeying through the wilderness. The manna is daily descending; and the water of life continually flowing to sustain and refresh me. Jesus, the true bread from heaven, is freely given; the Holy Spirit, as a living stream, is graciously supplied from the fountain of eternal love. O! how great is the goodness, truth, and mercy, of my covenant God, Father, Son, and Spirit, to an unworthy worm of the earth. Lord, make me grateful. Give me a believing and a loving heart. Preserve me from self-will and self-seeking; from self-sufficiency and self-pleasing. Mould my will into thine; and enable me in all things to seek thy glory.

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah, in safety through this desert land. Shield me by thy power. Cheer me with thy presence. Uphold my goings in thy way. Let me not turn aside into crooked paths; nor dread any danger, while in the path of duty. Keep me as the apple of an eye. Hide me under the shadow of thy wings.

Impart that spiritual illumination which will direct me aright; that spiritual strength, which will enable me to endure unto the end; that assurance of faith, which will animate me to the conflict; and that experience of thy love, which will support me under every trial, and cause me to die, rather than deny thee before men. O grant these inestimable blessings, for thine own mercy and truth's sake; for thou, O Lord, alone art the God of my salvation.

Holy Father! hear my prayer,
As, through Jesus, it ascends;
On Thee I cast my every care,
Now the day of labour ends.
Soon will sleep my eyelids close,
In Thy love may I repose.

All my days are known to Thee,
All my times are in Thy hand;
Life is like the rolling sea;
Ebbs and flows at Thy command:
As a plant doth bloom and die,
Man is only vanity.

Thus to-day is swiftly gone,
Solemn witness to appear
At Jehovah's holy throne,—
How shall I the judgment bear?
Lord! I shrink with shame and awe,
'Midst the thunders of Thy law.

Jesus! clothe my naked soul,
With Thy Righteousness divine,
Thou canst make the wounded whole,
Let Thy Spirit seal me Thine.
Pour Thy comfort in my heart,
Never from my soul depart.

Hide me, thou Almighty Friend,
Under Thy paternal wing,
From the ills which life attend,
Then will I Thy goodness sing.
Lord! renew my wasted powers,
Consecrate my waking hours.

III.—THE UNPROFITABLE NATURE OF BODILY EXERCISE WHEN MADE A SUBSTITUTE FOR GODLINESS.

"Bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which o come."—1 Tim. iv. 8.

ACIOUS God! impress this truth upon every heart, t all who call themselves Christians may live under saving influence.

Bodily exercise profiteth little, when confined to

the externals of religion. We may regularly attend the house of God; be stated communicants at the Lord's Table; observe with rigour the appointed fasts of the Church; use various austerities to mortify the flesh; be conscientiously strict in private devotion, and in family worship; be zealous for the Church in all its rites and ceremonies; be actively engaged in the management of religious and benevolent institutions: and yet, with all this bodily exercise, remain mere Formalists. Nothing is pleasing to God, nothing is vital in religion, but what springs from faith in Christ. Without love, all our doings are nothing worth.*

O! then, what need we have to watch and pray, lest we should be deceiving ourselves, having only the form of godliness whilst denying its power. We may deceive ourselves and others, but the all-seeing God cannot be deceived. He looketh at the heart. He weigheth the spirits. Blessed Lord! show me my true state and character. Deliver me from a deceived heart, from formality and hypocrisy. Give me a single eye, make me upright and sincere before thee.

Man is naturally legal and self-righteous. He is ever ready to substitute bodily exercise for godliness. The ancient Jews were continually reproved by their prophets on this very account. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord.....When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand to tread my courts?.....When ye make many prayers I will not hear: your hands are full of blood."†

True devotion cannot live in a sinful atmosphere, but *formality can*. This truth is verified in every age of the Church.

Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is. What a sweet assurance to the people of God. They shall have every thing that can render this life truly happy; for, being the children of God by faith

* Heb. xi. 6.; 1 Cor. xiii. † Isa. i. 11, 12, 15.

in Christ Jesus, he will withhold nothing from them that is really for their good.

Their sins are all forgiven through the blood of Christ. They are justified freely by his grace, and have peace with God. They are adopted into his family, and become heirs of his kingdom. They are made the temples of the Holy Ghost, who dwelleth in them, to enlighten, guide, sanctify, and comfort them on their way to Zion.

They may be hated and persecuted by the world; they may be often in heaviness through manifold temptations; they may often groan, being burdened; they may be frequently harassed by the enemy of souls, and by the rebellious lustings of indwelling sin: but they still have the promise of the life that now is. They shall have sweet seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord; they shall enjoy a pleasure to which the world is a stranger, a pleasure flowing from a close and abiding union to Christ their living Head, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the godhead bodily, and out of whose fulness they shall receive continual supplies of grace and strength. They may be poor in temporal things, but Jesus will sweeten their little portion, while the rich have often gall and wormwood poured into their golden cup

O! my soul, art thou looking unto Jesus? Art thou longing to obtain an interest in his blood? Ah! what avail the gilded pomp and grandeur of the world? Do I want to be rich? Let me look at the end of the rich worldling who fared sumptuously every day, but when called into eternity, was cast into the lake of fire!*

Do I seek the praise of men and the honours of the world? Let me remember, that "whosoever will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God;"† that all who love the world, shall perish with the world, when Christ shall come in flaming fire to take vengeance on all who will not have him to reign over them.

* Luke xvi. 19—31. † James iv. 4.

Do I pant after the pleasures of the world? Let me not forget, that all who now place their happiness in *sinful* gratifications shall feel the gnawing of the worm that never dieth, and the torment of the fire which never shall be quenched.*

"Seek," then, O my soul, "those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set thy affection on things above, not on things on the earth."† Labour to possess that godliness which hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

Blessed truth; *the promise of the life to come*, is included in godliness. Oh! what a treasure, surpassing all the riches of ten thousand worlds. Could I call the stars my own, this vast possession would dwindle to a point, when compared with the inconceivably glorious portion of the humblest believer. He is an Heir of God, and a Joint-Heir with Christ.‡

Death alone can reveal the fulness of this blessedness. Here we must live by faith. So did St. John: "Now are we," said he, "the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, *we shall be like him*; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure."§

O! thou eternal Spirit of all grace, renew my soul in righteousness, and fill me with light and love. Preserve me from formality. Guard me against self-deception. Deliver me from false views of religion, and false marks of grace. Enable me to walk in the narrow way, and strengthen me to withstand the world, the flesh, and the devil; to confess thee before men, to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.‖

O give me a new heart, that in simplicity and godly sincerity I may live a life of faith on earth,

* Mark ix. 44, 46, 48. † Col. iii. 1, 2.
‡ Rom. viii. 17. § 1 John iii. 2, 3. ‖ Jude 3.

abound in the fruits of righteousness, and live a life of glory with thee in heaven.

Though bodily exercise, apart from godliness, profiteth little; yet, when connected *with*, and resulting *from* true piety, it profiteth much. Thus St. Paul declared to the Corinthians: "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved."* His life, from the period of his conversion, was dedicated to the service of his Saviour. He deemed no labour too great, no toil too severe, no privation too painful, if only he could extend the Redeemer's kingdom, and be made instrumental in bringing sinners to Christ. He exhorted the Roman Christians to active service: "As ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity, unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness, unto holiness."†

The Corinthians he also admonished: "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."‡

His epistles abound with exhortations to activity in the cause of Christ, which may be summed up in the one addressed to the Hebrews: "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do show the *same diligence* to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."§

True believers are consecrated to the Lord. "Know ye not," saith the Apostle, "that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?‖ "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."**

* 2 Cor. xii. 15. † Rom. vi. 19.
‡ 1 Cor. x. 31. § Heb. vi. 10—12. ‖ 1 Cor. iii. 16.
** 1 Cor. vi. 20.

Surely this is one of the unsearchable riches of Christ. What an inconceivable honour for a poor worthless sinner to be made an habitation of God through the Spirit. For, "thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."* Every true believer is therefore humble and contrite, because with such the high and lofty One condescends to dwell. "To this man," saith the Lord, "will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."† Oh! how gracious is our God. He "is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit."‡ "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise,"§ was the prayer of David, when he supplicated for mercy.

The true believer is clothed with humility. Being filled with self-abasing views, he cries out with Job: "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."‖ And with Jacob: "I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies."** Yea, with Paul he esteems himself to be "less than the least of all saints," the chief of sinners.††

O! my soul, are these thy feelings and views? Art thou panting after Christ? Art thou hungering and thirsting after righteousness? Is sin thy burden? Is purity thy delight?

The true believer in Jesus experiences more pleasure in crucifying a lust, than the sensualist does in gratifying it; which proves that the gospel, even in its most painful exercises, far exceeds the fleeting pleasures of sin. The pleasures of the wicked, if such they can be called, are like the transient meteor, while the enjoyments of the righteous resemble the

* Isa. lvii. 15. † Isa. lxvi. 2.
‡ Psa. xxxiv. 18. § Psa. li. 17. ‖ Job xlii. 6.
** Gen. xxxii. 10. †† Eph. iii. 8.; 1 Tim. i. 15.

shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The gratifications of the wicked, in the end, bite like a serpent and sting like an adder; but the felicities of the godly, flowing from faith in Christ, and communion with the Father through him, yield their sweetness in a dying hour. Truly, then, may we say with David: "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace."* And with Solomon, "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."†

Happy, indeed, is the man who can say, in humility and sincerity, I desire above all things to love Jesus, and to repose my soul fully and entirely upon him. Where can I expect comfort, but from Him who is the fountain of felicity? Where can I find wisdom, but in Him in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge? Where can I obtain pardon and justification, but in and through Him who paid the price for my redemption, even his own most precious blood; and who obeyed that holy law, which demands a sinless obedience to all its requirements?

How beautiful, how glorious, is the plan of human redemption, which amply provides for the honour of God and the happiness of man. Well may angels desire to look into this mystery of grace.‡ Surely nothing can more clearly prove the blinding, hardening, and rebellious nature of sin, than the manner in which this dispensation of mercy is received by a world of sinners. Jesus, the compassionate Jesus, daily knocks at the door of our hearts, and sweetly says, "If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."§ A promise this, of delightful communion and enjoyment of his love. But what reception does he meet with? Do we hail his approach with gladness? Do we throw wide open the doors of a willing mind? Do we say, Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

* Psa. xxxvii. 37. † Prov. iii. 17. ‡ 1 Pet. i. 12.
§ Rev. iii. 20.

Alas! no. We ungratefully bar the doors against him, by unbelief, and pride, and the love of sin, as if he were coming to destroy our comfort, and to rob us of our peace. Oh! blind infatuation. Awful delusion! Jesus comes indeed to destroy our *false* comforts, and to remove our *false* peace. He comes to dislodge the strong man armed, and to save us from indwelling sin. He comes to dispel the darkness from our minds, to show us our true state and character, and to deliver us from that fatal security, by which we are bound. He comes to take away that self-love which conceals us *from ourselves;* which makes us fancy that all is safe and well, though there be but a step, and that a very short one too, between this destructive repose and everlasting torment.

O! how we should love this kind and heavenly Visitor, who comes to us on such an errand of love. Blessed Jesus! put forth thine hand and touch my sin-sick soul. Speak the word only, and thy servant shall be healed. O! thou all-gracious Redeemer, now that thou art in heaven, thy love and pity are the same; and my wants and weaknesses, my guilt and corruption, my helplessness and wretchedness, are so many pleaders with Thee to have mercy upon me! Thou hast said, "They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick."* Lord, I am sick, heal me. Thou hast said, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."† Lord, I am a sinner; the chief of sinners. O save me! Grant unto me repentance unto life, that I may turn from every evil way to Thee, the only true and living God. Lord, the work is all thine own, and the whole glory shall be thine. I will lay the crown at thy feet, and ascribe salvation unto Thee, who redeemed me through thy blood, when made a vessel of mercy; a pillar in thy temple, to go out no more.

* Matt. ix. 12.; Mark ii. 17.; Luke v. 31.

† Matt. ix. 13.; Mark ii. 17.; Luke v. 32.

LIX.—ON THE MINISTRY OF ANGELS.

"Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"—Heb. i. 14.

Under the Old Testament dispensation, the angels held a prominent part, as instruments both of mercy and judgment. When the Gospel kingdom was first established, they manifested their friendly agency. The work of man's redemption employed, and still employs the angelic host, whose happiness is centred in doing the will, and promoting the glory of God. May our prayer ever be, "Thy will be done, in earth, as it is in heaven."*

The angel Gabriel appeared to the Virgin Mary, and announced to her the honour of becoming the Mother of the Messiah, who should reign over the house of Jacob; and of whose kingdom there shall be no end. Well might he say, "Blessed art thou among women."†

By the angel of the Lord, the tender fears of Joseph were removed, who told him that the child should be called Jesus, for he should save his people from their sins.‡

When born in Bethlehem, the glorious event was made known to the wondering shepherds by the angel of the Lord, who dissipated their alarm by words of love: "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.....And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."§

The arrival of the wise men from the East to

* Matt. vi. 10.; Luke xi. 2. † Luke i. 28.
‡ Matt. i. 21. § Luke ii. 10—14.

Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him," awakened the jealous fears of Herod, who immediately determined to murder the royal infant. To effect his purpose, he gathered together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, and demanded of them where Christ should be born. He also diligently enquired of the wise men, at what time the star appeared.*

Jesus was indeed Messiah, the Prince; for thus said the angel to Mary: "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David."† But, "my kingdom," said Jesus to Pilate, "is not of this world."‡ He came to establish a spiritual kingdom on the earth, and to save his people from their sins, from this present evil world, and from the wrath to come. He came to destroy the works of the devil, to bruise the serpent's head, to restore man to the lost image of his Maker, to open the kingdom of heaven to all believers. He came to magnify the law, and make it honourable, by his sinless obedience, and by suffering the penalty due to our sins. He died the just for the unjust to bring us nigh unto God. Thus all who truly believe in him, are *his people*, and shall be saved with an everlasting salvation, and shall never be confounded, world without end.

Joseph and Mary were quietly living in Bethlehem, little thinking of the danger to which the precious infant was exposed, when the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child, to destroy him."§ He promptly obeyed the kind intimation, and thus escaped the agonising slaughter of the babes of Bethlehem.

* Matt. ii. 1—16. † Luke i. 32. ‡ John xviii. 36.
§ Matt. ii. 13.

When Herod was dead, behold the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, while residing in Egypt, and bade him return into the land of Israel.* Thus angels were employed, and, no doubt, found themselves happily so, in being the messengers of mercy, the harbingers of good news, the protecting instruments of the infant Saviour.

When Jesus, our ever compassionate Redeemer, entered on his work of grace, the angels never forsook him in his deepest trials. Having overcome the tempter in the wilderness, "Angels came and ministered unto him."† In the garden of Gethsemene, that place of *unknown agonies* which Jesus underwent for us, when his sweat was as it were great drops of blood, falling to the ground; and when his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, "there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him."‡

To Peter, when he had rashly cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest, Jesus said, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" Thus, the patient, suffering Redeemer, had angels at his command: "but," he added, "how then shall the scripture be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"§ O! the depth of sovereign grace!

How wonderful is the love of Jesus. He could have rescued himself out of the hands of his enemies, but he would not—and why? that poor, miserable, hell-deserving sinners might be saved from eternal death, from the never-ending flame, from the torments of hell! "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name."

At the sepulchre of Jesus, the angel of the Lord rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. But to the women,

* Matt. ii. 20. † Matt. iv. 11.; Mark i. 13.
‡ Luke xxii. 43, 44. § Matt. xxvi. 53, 54.

who came to anoint the body with spices, and to weep at the tomb of their beloved Lord, the angel said, "Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here; for he is *risen*, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay."*

O! what joyful news! "He is risen." Thus Jesus was proved to be the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, by his resurrection from the dead. Had he not risen, we should still have been in our sins; and all who had fallen asleep in Christ, believing him to have been the true Messiah, would have perished; for, says St. Paul, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching is vain, and your faith is also vain."† But oh! glorious announcement by the angel of the Lord—"He is risen." And with him are raised our highest hopes and expectations. As Christ was delivered for our offences, so he was raised for our justification.‡ Oh! that my heart were always in tune, to sing the praises of that Saviour, whose name is sweeter than all created harmonies.

When Jesus ascended into heaven, and while the Apostles were steadfastly looking toward heaven, as he went up, till a cloud received him out of their sight, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."§ Thus said St. John, endued with the spirit of prophecy: "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him:"‖ also, St. Paul, "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God."**

Thus, by faith, I would follow my Saviour, and ascend after him, in heart and affection, through

* Matt. xxviii. 2—6.; Mark xvi. 6.

† 1 Cor. xv. 14. ‡ Rom. iv. 25. § Acts i. 11.

‖ Rev. i. 7. ** 1 Thess. iv. 16.

the power of the Holy Ghost. Oh! that my affections may ever be set on things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

How unremitting was the ministration of angels. These blessed spirits were employed on errands of mercy at the birth, the persecution, the temptation, the agony, the resurrection, and the ascension of Christ; while kings and rulers, priests and people, were rejecting, despising, and crucifying the Lord of glory. Oh! how surpassing wonder is the goodness and forbearance of God.

The holy angels were also ministering spirits to the people of God.

To Zacharias an angel of the Lord was sent with the joyful tidings that his wife Elisabeth should have a son, and that the child should be the promised Forerunner and Harbinger of the Messiah.*

An angel was commissioned to save Peter from the power of Herod and the fury of the Jews; but, to smite the proud, persecuting king: for, when the people shouted after his oration, saying, "It is the voice of a God, and not of a man,—immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost. But the word of God grew and multiplied."†

"There stood by me this night," said Paul to the affrighted mariners, "the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee."‡

So even now, though unseen by us, angels are doubtless employed by the compassionate Saviour on errands of mercy and protection to his people. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Yes, truly. Is a sinner converted? "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that

* Luke i. 5—25. † Acts xii.

‡ Acts xxvii. 23, 24.

repenteth."* Not only when whole regions are converted to the faith, but when *one sinner repenteth.* O! what a deep interest do angels take in the happiness of man. Is a sinner transformed into a saint? "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.....O fear the Lord, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him."†

But angels are also employed as ministers of vengeance. Witness the destruction of Sodom;‡ the death of the first-born in Egypt;§ the overthrow of the Assyrian army;‖ the pestilence in the reign of David.** By parables, Jesus declared that at the great day of judgment, angels shall sever the wicked from among the just, the tares from the wheat.†† The book of Revelation is full of the ministration of angels, opening the seals, sounding the trumpets, and pouring out the vials of the wrath of God.

This view of the ministration of angels brings the two worlds near together. If evil spirits are ever exerting their malignant agency, may we not hope that good spirits are employing their benign labours in behalf of the faithful in Christ Jesus? Chariots of fire surrounded Elisha, which his servant could not see, till his eyes were opened at the prayer of his master.‡‡ Balaam saw not the angel of the Lord with the drawn sword in his hand, till his eyes were opened.§§ And we know not how near these heavenly visitants may be to us in the time of danger or temptation, or at the hour of death. The soul of Lazarus was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom.‖‖

But, in the midst of trials, this is the grand source of our happiness and security, to have Christ for our portion; whom all the angels of God wor-

* Luke xv. 10. † Psa. xxxiv. 7, 9. ‡ Gen. xix.
§ Exod. xi. 5.; xii. 12, 29. ‖ 2 Kings xix. 35.; Isa. xxxvii. 36.
** 2 Sam. xxi. 1. †† Matt. xiii. 41, 42.; xxv. 31, 32.
‡‡ 2 Kings vi. 14—18. §§ Numb. xxii. 22—31.
‖‖ Luke xvi. 22.

ship, even him, who is the Son of the Father, the incarnate Word, who is exalted "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come."* For, "God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."†

"Jesus, the Name high over all,
In hell, or earth, or sky;
Angels and men before it fall,
And devils fear and fly.

"Jesus, the Name to sinners dear,
The name to sinners given;
It scatters all their guilty fear:
It turns their hell to heaven.

"O that the world might taste and see
The riches of his grace!
The arms of love that compass me,
Would all mankind embrace.

"His only righteousness I show,
His saving truth proclaim:
'T is all my business here below
To cry, 'Behold the Lamb!'

"Happy, if with my latest breath
I may but gasp his name;
Preach him to all, and say in death,
'Behold, behold, the Lamb.'"

* Eph. i. 21. † Phil. ii. 9—11.

LX.—THE PROGRESS OF SPIRITUAL LIGHT, IN THE MINDS OF THE APOSTLES.

"The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."—Prov. iv. 18.

An attentive reader of the New Testament must be struck with the slow and gradual manner in which the Apostles were brought to know and follow the divine Redeemer, till they at last sealed the truth with their blood. Jesus could have filled their minds *at once* with his heavenly light, but it pleased him to make their path "as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

This proves to us that all saving knowledge is the gift of God, who alone can remove the veil from our hearts, and enable us to see in all his glory, that precious Saviour, whom to know is life eternal.* "Divine wisdom proceeds gradually, as in the work of creation, so also in the work of providence in the world, and of sanctification in particular souls." "In the new creation, the first thing that God works in the soul in conversion is light. The soul, by nature, is a dark soul; but when grace comes, light comes; for wherever the Spirit is, he is an enlightening Spirit. This work is easy to almighty power; 't is but God's saying, Let there be light in such a soul, and there will be light; and though this light be small at first, yet it is growing; 'for the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.'"†

Thus it was with the disciples of our Lord. Their minds underwent a gradual illumination. Much darkness rested upon them, till after the resurrection and ascension of Christ. Then the sun of righteousness arose upon them with healing in his wings.

* John xvii. 3. † Philip Henry on Genesis.

Then, the Spirit of truth, the promised gift of the Father, was poured out upon them. Their understandings were then fully enlightened. They saw Christ in the mirror of the prophecies, and beheld the prophecies fulfilled in him. Hence, St. Peter could say, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty."* "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."†

It may afford some profitable meditation to trace the progress of light as exemplified in the disciples of our Lord. This short review will teach us humility, dependence, and charity. If spiritual light should, in any degree, be stronger in one Christian than in another, let him not glory in himself. "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."‡ God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, can alone shine in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ.§ Mere head-knowledge produces self-conceit; true spiritual wisdom, lowliness of mind. The one puffeth up, the other edifieth.

The first chapter of St. John's gospel introduces to our notice, Andrew, Peter, Philip, and Nathaniel, in immediate connection with the ministry of John the Baptist.

"The next day after, John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!"‖ These words were accompanied by a divine power, for "the two disciples heard him speak, and they *followed Jesus.* Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and

* 2 Pet. i. 16. † Acts x. 43. ‡ 1 Cor. i. 31.; 2 Cor. x. 17.
§ 2 Cor. iv. 6. ‖ Vers. 35, 36.

abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour."* This comparatively short interview was like the streak of light on the Eastern sky; it was the promise of a glorious day.

We have the name of *one* of the two disciples, who heard John declaring Jesus to be "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world;"† for it is recorded, "One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was ANDREW, Simon Peter's brother."‡ It is instructive and delightful, to see how soon an honest conviction of truth produces exertion in its cause. "He *first findeth* his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, The Christ, and *he brought him to Jesus.*"§ Happy, indeed, are they who are made instrumental in bringing their beloved relatives to the Saviour. Andrew would, no doubt, tell the joyful news to his neighbours and friends, but natural affection led him *first* to find his own brother Simon. Many brothers would laugh at, or feel offended by, the solicitude of a pious relative; but not so Simon Peter. He gladly came to Jesus; and oh! what honour and blessedness awaited him. "When Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is, by interpretation, A stone."‖ This appears to be the first interview which Andrew and Peter had with Jesus. It was both emblematical and prophetic of Peter's future character and conduct.

The greatest events are often connected with, and flow from, apparently trivial causes.

Jacob little thought when he sent Joseph to enquire after his brethren's welfare, that he would never see him till Joseph was made the governor over all the land of Egypt.**

When Moses was feeding his flock in the desert, and beheld a bush on fire, he little supposed that his curiosity, which led him aside to see this great sight,

* Vers. 37—39. † Ver. 29. ‡ Ver. 40.
§ Vers. 41, 42. ‖ Ver. 42. ** Gen. xxxix—xlvi.

a bush on fire and yet not burnt, would be followed by such important consequences, as those of his becoming the Deliverer and the Lawgiver of the children of Israel.*

When Kish, the father of Saul, sent his son to seek after the asses which had gone astray, how little did he imagine, that, before his return, his son would be anointed king over Israel.†

When Jesse said unto David, "Take now for thy brethren an ephah of this parched corn, and these ten loaves, and run to the camp to thy brethren,..... and look how thy brethren fare;"‡ how little did he expect such a glorious result, as the overthrow of the Philistine army by means of David, and the promised exaltation of David to be the son-in-law to the king.§ So, when John the Baptist pointed to Jesus as "the Lamb of God," his words, like a magnet, drew Andrew to Jesus; and Andrew could not rest, till he had apprised his brother Simon of the joyful discovery. "A word in season how good is it." We cannot tell how far the influence of a casual expression may extend. Often it is as a nail fastened in a sure place. God can bless the weakest effort, and overrule the most trivial occurrence to the good of souls. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord."‖

What multitudes in our day are pointed to the Saviour, in these very words: "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." But alas! they are pointless words. They do not pierce the conscience, nor enter into the heart. They fall unheeded on the ear, and why? Because of unbelief. Though baptised in the name of Christ, though forming a part of his visible Church, though considered by some as regenerated persons, thousands listen without emotion to the blessed call, they feel no drawing of the heart to Christ; no desire to follow him, much less to urge their relatives and friends to

* Exod. iii.; xix., xx., &c. † 1 Sam. ix., x. ‡ 1 Sam. xvii. 17, 18.
§ 1 Sam. xvii. xviii. ‖ Zech. iv. 6.

do so. Truly "by grace are we saved through faith; and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God."*

"The day following, Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter."† As Andrew sought his brother Simon, so "Philip *findeth* Nathaniel, and saith unto him, We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."‡

Nathaniel was slow to believe that any good thing could come out of Nazareth. Philip urged the most convincing plea: "COME AND SEE."§ Thus did the woman of Samaria: "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: Is not this the Christ?"‖ Her neighbours went, and blessed was their visit: "Now we believe," said they to the woman, "not because of thy saying; for *we have heard him ourselves*, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."** Equally blessed was the visit of Nathaniel to Jesus. As he was approaching the Saviour, Jesus saith of him: "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" Nathaniel, surprised at this address, said, "Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee."†† This display of divine omniscience, and this knowledge of what was passing in the mind and heart of Nathaniel in that secluded spot, caused him at once to exclaim, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel."‡‡

How delightful are the manifestations of grace and mercy. Jesus is the light of the world. He can cast his bright beams into the minds of the simple-hearted, while the self-righteous Pharisee is left enveloped in darkness.

During the life of John the Baptist, an evident

* Eph. ii. 8. † John i. 43, 44. ‡ Ver. 45.
§ Ver. 46. ‖ John iv. 29. ** Ver. 42.
†† John i. 47, 48. ‡‡ Ver. 49.

impression was made on the minds of his disciples, that Jesus was "the Lamb of God;" though it is probable they did not attach themselves to Christ, as their Lord and Master, till after John was cast into prison. "Now *after that John was put in prison*, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel. Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: (for they were fishers.) And Jesus said unto them, *Come ye after me*, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him."* As God said, Let light be, and light was: so, when the Incarnate Word said, "Follow me," they straightway forsook their nets, and followed him. It would seem that when Andrew and Peter were deprived of the ministry of John, they returned to their usual occupation, but Jesus, who designed them for a glorious work, called them by his grace. They instantly obeyed the call; for the outward call of the word was accompanied by the inward call of the Spirit. They were inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon them the blessed office of becoming fishers of men.

"When Jesus had gone a little farther thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets."† Little did they think what honour awaited them, of becoming the future ambassadors for Christ. "Straightway he *called them:*" and the call was equally effectual, for "they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him."‡

This gracious call of Andrew and Peter, James and John, is also related in the fifth chapter of St. Luke,§ where a miracle is recorded, which led them

* Mark i. 14—18. † Ver. 19. ‡ Ver. 20.
§ Vers. 1—16.

at once to believe that Jesus was that prophet who is come into the world; for "John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true."*

By his laborious journeys, and preaching, and by the miracles which he wrought, Jesus gathered around him, many who were closely attached to him, and became his constant disciples. The blessed Redeemer, at length, after *much prayer*, selected twelve out of the number of his followers, who were called, by way of distinction, Apostles. "And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and *continued all night* in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named Apostles; Simon (whom he also named Peter) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alpheus, and Simon called Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor."†

Having thus ordained these twelve men to the work of the ministry, for we read in the third chapter of Mark, that Jesus "ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth *to preach*:"‡ he gave them a commission to proclaim the glad tidings of the kingdom, but only "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." The extension of their commission did not take place till after the resurrection of Christ. Thus we read in the tenth chapter of Matthew: "These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand."§ This made St. Paul say to the unbelieving Jews at Antioch, in Pisidia: "It was necessary that the word of God should *first* have been spoken to you."‖

* John x. 41. † See Luke vi. 12—16. ‡ Ver. 14.
§ Vers. 5—7. ‖ Acts xiii. 46.

We have practically set before us the *election of grace.* When Judas, the traitor, had absented himself to effect his deed in darkness, Jesus said to the eleven disciples: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that *your fruit should remain.*"* What a sweet promise of *persevering grace.* The Apostles received a divine call and commission from Christ, as the Head of his Church. He appointed them to be his ambassadors, and heralds to proclaim the near approach of the kingdom of grace. But they saw not the spiritual nature of Messiah's reign, till after his resurrection; nor its fulness of glory, till after his ascension, and the descent of the Holy Ghost.

This blessed kingdom, which Daniel foretold that the God of heaven would set up,† is the kingdom of the Messiah, the UNIVERSAL CHURCH OF CHRIST. Satan, in every age, has opposed this dominion of the Messiah. Against the true Church, this arch enemy has levelled all his power; but though often assaulted it is not destroyed, no, nor ever shall be.

The true Church, the spiritual temple of the Lord, is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone."‡ It is secure, being founded on the Rock of ages.

This redeemed Church, the mystical body of Christ, is knit together in love. It is closely united to its living Head. When any of its members suffer, the glorified Jesus sympathises with them. Is Saul haling men and women to prison, and consenting unto their death? The tender Saviour arrests him with these words: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"§ Christ *in heaven* was persecuted in his members upon earth. Oh! how great is the mystery of godliness! How unsearchable are the riches of grace! Saul, the persecutor, when Paul the Apostle,

* John xv. 16. † Dan. ii. 44. ‡ Eph. ii. 20.
§ Acts viii. 3., ix. 4.

most beautifully describes the love of Christ to his Church, under the figure of the marriage union.*

The *visible* Church of Christ, like his own little family of disciples while on earth, is composed of friends and traitors. For this reason he spake several parables, descriptive of its *mixed* character. The wheat and the tares must now grow together in the same field; the good and the bad fishes must be contained in the same net; the wise and the foolish virgins must dwell together, until the great separation day, when "the Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."†

Hooker asks this important question: "Is it then possible, that the self-same men should belong both to the synagogue of Satan, and to the Church of Jesus Christ? Unto that Church which is his *mystical body*, not possible; because that body consisteth of none but only true Israelites, true sons of Abraham, true servants and saints of God. Howbeit of the *visible body* and Church of Jesus Christ, those may be, and oftentimes are, in respect of the main parts of their outward profession, who in regard of their inward disposition of mind, yea, of external conversation, yea, even of some parts of their very profession, are most worthily both hateful in the sight of God himself, and in the eyes of the sounder part of the visible Church most execrable. Our Saviour, therefore, compareth the kingdom of heaven to a net, whereunto all which cometh, neither is, nor seemeth fish: his Church he compareth unto a field, where tares, manifestly known and seen by all men, do grow intermingled with good corn; and even so shall continue till the final consummation of the world." "For lack of diligent observing the difference, first, between the Church of God, mystical and visible, then between the visible sound and corrupted, some-

* See Eph. v. 23—32. † Matt. xiii. 41, 42.

times more, sometimes less, the oversights are neither few nor light that have been committed."*

We come, then, to this conclusion, that, "All are not Israel which are of Israel."† Because the Jews were circumcised, they did not necessarily become the *spiritual seed* of Abraham. Thus wrote St. Paul: "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."‡

From this declaration it is plainly to be inferred, that the sprinkling of water in baptism, which is a sign of profession, and also a sign of regeneration,§ cannot, by a mere operation on the body, make us real members of the mystical body of Christ. There must be the Baptism of the Spirit, which is always accompanied by repentance and faith, by a firm determination to take up the cross, and to become the faithful soldiers of Jesus Christ.

As our divine Teacher has told us, by his beautiful parable of the Vine, that every branch *in Him* that *beareth fruit* shall be pruned, that it may bear more fruit; and that every branch *in Him* that *beareth not fruit*, shall be cut off and cast into the fire;‖ it is evident, that he intends us to discern between the *nominal* and the *real* believer. So, when he said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,"** he conveys the same distinction by the words, "of water" and "of the Spirit." The last command to his Apostles, just before his ascension, contains this important classification of the baptised members of the visible Church; "He that *believeth*, and is baptised, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned:"†† evidently implying, though he

* Hooker.—Book iii. chap. i. † Rom. ix. 6.
‡ Rom. ii. 28, 29. § Article xxvii. ‖ John xv. 2—6.
** John iii. 5. †† Mark xvi. 16.

be baptised; thus declaring, that without faith, the mere application of water would not save the soul. No exception is here made with respect to infants in their baptism. Therefore, when they come to age, except they repent, they shall all likewise perish. By the outward and visible form of baptism we may be said to be "born of water," because we hereby enter into a *new state*, possess *new privileges*, and stand in a *new covenant relation to God*, just as the children of the Jews did, when admitted by circumcision into their Church.* We become members of the *visible* church. We call ourselves Christians, and if we truly repent and believe, and are faithful to the vows and promises made in our name at our baptism, we shall assuredly be made, in the highest spiritual sense of these terms, the members of Christ, the children of God, and the inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.

But experience too sadly proves, that thousands of baptised Christians neither repent, nor believe, nor love, nor obey, the Saviour to their dying hour. To call such characters regenerated, in the *spiritual* sense of the term, is to place a flattering unction to their souls. To cry to them, peace, peace, when there is no peace; is only to lull them into a fatal security. Truly this is daubing with untempered mortar.†

To be born of the Spirit, to experience a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness, is the inward and spiritual grace of baptism. It is to be made a new creature in Christ Jesus;‡ to be renewed in the spirit of our minds; to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.§ It is not only our being brought into a *new state*, as professing members of the *visible church*; but also receiving a *new nature*, through the inward operation of the Holy Ghost, whereby we become the living members of the *mystical body of Christ*. This is the fruit and work of Sovereign Mercy.

* See Rom ix. 4, 5. † Ezek. xiii. 10, 11.
‡ 2 Cor. v. 17.; Gal. vi. 15. § Eph. iv. 23, 24.

On a profession of *true* faith, the Eunuch was baptised by Philip, and went on his way, rejoicing in the blessings of salvation.*

On a profession of faith, which proved to be *false*, Simon Magus was baptised; and, by St. Peter was declared to be "in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity."†

Having *first received the baptism of the Spirit*, Cornelius and his friends were admitted by the *baptism of water*, as the initiatory rite, into the Christian Church.‡ If the heart be wrong, the performance of a ceremony, however scriptural, will profit us nothing. Were it not so, Simon Magus would have been accounted as regenerated, apart from true repentance and faith, which is subversive of the truth of the Gospel.

The words of Christ can never be *reversed*, however much they may be perverted: "He that *believeth*, and is baptised, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned."§ Without faith it is impossible to please God.‖ Baptism, without true faith and its holy fruits, cannot save us. It will only be the seal of our condemnation.

It is worthy of remark, that John the Baptist made an important distinction between his baptism and that of Christ. "I indeed baptise you with *water* unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptise you with the *Holy Ghost*, and with fire."** This distinction was carried on under our Lord's ministry: "When the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptised more disciples than John,.....he left Judea, and departed again into Galilee." In order to preserve the superiority of our Lord's baptism, the sacred historian adds, in a parenthesis, *(though Jesus himself baptised not, but his disciples.)*†† From hence we

* Acts viii. 36—40. † Acts viii. 13—23.
‡ Acts x. 44—48. § Mark xvi. 16. ‖ Heb. xi. 6.
** Matt. iii. 11. †† John iv. 1—3.

learn that the Apostles baptised with *water*; while the prerogative of the Divine Head of the Church was to baptise with the *Holy Ghost*. The declaration of John was verified on the day of Pentecost, when Jesus baptised his Apostles with the Holy Ghost and with fire.* And also, when the Holy Ghost descended, as *at the first*, on Cornelius and his company, before the baptismal rite, by *water*, was administered by St. Peter.†

When the disciples, who were of the circumcision, contended with Peter for eating with uncircumcised persons, he related the circumstance of Cornelius and his friends: "As I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, *as on us at the beginning*. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how *he said*, John indeed baptised *with water*; but ye shall be baptised with *the Holy Ghost*. Forasmuch then as GOD GAVE THEM THE LIKE GIFT AS he did unto us who BELIEVED ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, what was I, that I could withstand God? When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."‡

Must we not, then, come to this conclusion, that the baptism of the Holy Ghost is the sole work of Christ; while the baptism of water is the work of his ministering servants.

These two *may be united*, through the sovereignty of divine grace; but that they are *not invariably so*, is evidenced by the unholy character of the baptised Simon Magus, and that of thousands of infidels and sensualists, who disfigure the visible Church in every age.

The kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, was about to be established, when our Divine Redeemer ordained his ministering servants to proclaim its near approach. But, alas! the Light shined in darkness, and the darkness com-

* Acts ii. 1—4. † See Acts x. 44—47.

‡ Acts xi. 15—18.

prehended it not.* The glory of Christ was hid from the Jews, through unbelief, prejudice, and the love of the world. They saw not in Jesus, the promised Messiah, the son of David, the Son of God. When they contemplated his humble birth, exclaiming, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" they rejected him as the Prophet foretold by Moses.† When he declared his equality with God the Father,—"I and my Father are one," they took up stones to stone him.‡ When he declared his divinity before the high priest, —"What further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death."§

The Apostles themselves, though they loved their Master, partook, in part, of this blindness, which arose from false views and expectations of the Messiah's kingdom. Had this not been the case they would not have contended which of them should be the greatest. Jesus taught them, that the humblest among them should be accounted the greatest in his kingdom.‖ Jewish prepossessions were so strongly fixed in their minds, that it was not till Christ had risen from the dead, and had appeared personally to them, that they were convinced that he was indeed THE CHRIST. Neither was the darkness wholly removed from their minds, till the descent of the Holy Ghost. Peter had indeed made a noble declaration: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." But this was not the result of natural reasoning. Jesus said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." It was spoken under a divine influence. But, even then, Peter did not comprehend the character of Christ. For, when Jesus foretold his sufferings, death, and resurrection, Peter replied, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be

* John i. 5. † Matt. xiii. 55—58.
‡ John x. 30, 31. § Matt. xxvi. 65, 66.; Mark xiv. 64.
‖ Matt. xviii. 1—4.

thine unto thee." As he had just before been blessed, so now he was reproved. "Jesus turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."*

The progress of light was gradual. The disciples saw much that was great and glorious in the miracles and discourses of their Lord; but they could not as yet receive the whole Truth into their minds. This is evident from our Lord's declaration: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth."†

When Jesus was asleep in the ship, during a great tempest, the disciples awoke him, saying, "Lord, save us: we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?"‡ This astonishment proves that they did not fully enter into the glorious nature of Christ's person, as God manifest in the flesh.

"While they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men; and they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry."§ This sorrow was natural, if they believed that their Lord and Master should endure such sufferings; but it is evident that they did not then enter into the end and design of his death, as being *a sacrifice for sin*. With the Jews in common, their minds were filled with thoughts of the *glories*, but not of the *humiliation* of the Messiah, so feelingly foretold by Isaiah.

After the transfiguration of Christ on the Mount, "he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen

* Matt. xvi. 16—23. † John xvi. 12, 13.
‡ Matt. viii. 24—27. § Matt. xvii. 22, 23.

from the dead. And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean."*

At another time, when Jesus was explaining the nature of spiritual defilement, the disciples asked him concerning the parable, and he said unto them: "Are ye so without understanding also?"†

In like manner, they could not explain the meaning of the words, "the leaven of the Pharisees," and "the leaven of Herod," supposing it to be said, because they had no bread; "and when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened?"‡

When the disciples could not cast out a dumb spirit, Jesus said, "O faithless generation! how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?"§

When they passed through Galilee, Jesus would not that any man should know this miracle which he had wrought, in casting out the dumb spirit; "for he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day. But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.|| In St. Luke's gospel, it is added, "And they understood none of these things: and this saying was *hid* from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken."**

All this evidences that remaining blindness which prevented the Apostles from beholding the glorious majesty of Christ, while veiled with humanity. The light was still feeble. When he was apprehended they all forsook him and fled; and though Peter followed him into the high priest's palace, yet there he denied him with oaths and curses.

After the crucifixion of their beloved Master, the disciples were overwhelmed with sorrow. All their hopes seemed to be entombed with Jesus. Whilst

* Mark ix. 9, 10. † Mark vii. 18. ‡ Mark viii. 15—17.
§ Mark ix. 19. || Mark ix. 30—32. ** Chap. xviii. 34.

the women, who were "last at the cross, and first at the grave," were weeping over their lost Lord, two angels said unto them: "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen..... They returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest.....And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not."*

As two of the disciples went that same day to a village called Emmaus, and were mournfully occupied in talking of their crucified Lord, Jesus joined them, in the character of a stranger, for "their eyes were holden, that they should not know him. He said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?"† They then disclosed the cause of their grief, and of their disappointed hope: "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done."‡ Jesus then reproved them for their unbelief, and ignorance of their own prophets: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."§ The day being far spent, at their constraining request, Jesus tarried with them. "As he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight." Then "they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures."‖

With hearts full of joy, "they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with

* Luke xxiv. 5—11. † Vers. 13—17. ‡ Ver. 21.
§ Vers. 25—27. ‖ Vers. 29—32.

them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread. And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you."* So unexpected was this appearance, and their faith in the resurrection was yet so weak, that "they were terrified and affrighted."† Then the risen Redeemer showed them his *pierced* hands and feet; and while they believed not for joy, and wondered, he took meat and did eat before them, and said unto them, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me. Then *opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures*, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name *among all nations*, beginning at Jerusalem."‡ St. John adds to this most precious interview: "Then said Jesus to them *again*, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost."§

The light was now rapidly progressing. The shadows were dispersing, and truth was rising full-orbed upon the souls of the Apostles.

When first ordained, and sent to preach, their commission was restricted to the house of Israel, but now that the veil of the temple was rent in twain; now, that the partition wall was removed, the divine commission was as extensive as the globe on which they dwelt.

Jesus "appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and

* Vers. 33—36. † Ver. 37. ‡ Vers. 40—47.
§ John xx. 21, 22.

hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen. And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the the gospel *to every creature*. He that believeth, and is baptised, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned."*

The time was near approaching, when Jesus, in his bodily presence, should be removed from them. "The eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted," (with such difficulty is unbelief rooted out of the heart.) "Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach *all nations*, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things *whatsoever I have commanded you:* and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."†

This gracious promise will never fail, so long as the ministers of Christ are *faithful* to their commission. But, like every other promise, it is inseparably united to the due performance of the precept. Unfaithful ministers forfeit the promised presence.

It is a blessed truth, an all-supporting assurance, that Christ will ever be with the members of his *true* Church; and with all the ministers of his gospel in every age, who preach the truth in love, who are ensamples to the flock, and who are the genuine successors, *in heart and spirit*, of the holy Apostles. But if any part of the visible Church corrupt the word of God, persecute the sheep of Christ, and teach for doctrines the commandments of men, can we suppose that the Saviour will be with such an apostatised portion of it, in opposition to his own revelation vouchsafed to St. John?

"After the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of

* Mark xvi. 14—16. † Matt. xxviii. 16—20.

God."* Before his ascension, Jesus said to his disciples, "Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."† This the Apostles did. And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, while they were all with one accord in one place, the Holy Ghost descended upon them, and filled them with light and love, with boldness and power to proclaim in every tongue the wonderful works of God. By the first sermon of Peter, about three thousand souls were added to the Church, so truly was he made a fisher of men.‡ The work went on rapidly increasing. A great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.§ The flame of persecution was now kindled, but the bush was not consumed, because Christ was in the midst of it. The Apostles planted churches, ordained ministers, and the Lord added daily to the Church, such as should be saved. From Judea, the Apostles stretched themselves out to heathen lands, especially that monument of mercy, Saul of Tarsus, who was emphatically the Apostle to the Gentiles, having received from Christ a commission, "to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God."‖

From that time to this, Christ has had a Church in the world, and will have one to the end of time. But alas! those unregenerated members of the visible Church, whose hearts are still under the power of the evil one, have in every age hated and persecuted the *true* people of God; sometimes by fire and faggot, and always by cruel mockings and reproaches. In every age, the visible Church has exhibited "wolves, in sheep's clothing,"** "hirelings, who care not for the sheep;"†† and also, "witnesses, who prophesy in sackcloth:"‡‡ "men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."§§

* Mark xvi. 19. † Luke xxiv. 49.
‡ Acts ii. § Acts vi. 7. ‖ Acts xxvi. 17, 18.
** Matt. vii. 15. †† John x. 13. ‡‡ Rev. xi. 3.
§§ Acts xv. 26.

Power and influence, connected with worldly advancement, are seldom to be found among the spiritual portion of the visible Church. It pleases God to carry on his great designs by the weakest and most despised instruments, that the power may be manifestly his own, and that no man may glory in his presence.*

His faithful servants, in the midst of fiery trials, have ever this promise for their support; "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."† But not so, the unfaithful ministers of the gospel, who, though appointed to guide the people, darken, pervert, or destroy its simplicity and purity. Upon them, a woe, and not a blessing is pronounced. "Woe unto you, ye blind guides."‡ "Many times those that are most forward to *add* to divine commands, so making the way to heaven narrower to others than it is,§ are more ready than others to transgress the command. The Pharisees did add to the law of God by their *traditions*,‖ and who more frequent than they in the breach of the law?" How strong are the words of our Lord and Saviour: "Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.....Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered."** To such teachers, Jesus applies the prophecy of Isaiah respecting hypocrites: "This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me."††

As in the Jewish, so in the Christian Church, there has ever been, and still is, a determination to graft the traditions of men on the truth of the gospel, to entwine the merit of human works with the merits of the Redeemer. To these judaizing teachers of Christianity, St. Paul is most unsparing. "I would they were even cut off which trouble you.....He

* 1 Cor. i. 26—29.; 2 Cor. iv. 7. † Matt. xxviii. 20.
‡ Matt. xxiii. 16. § Matt. xxiii. 13.
‖ Matt. xv. 2—6.; Mark vii. 3—13. ** Mark vii. 9, 13.
†† Mark vii. 6.; Isa. xxix. 13.

that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be."*

The Apostle is so jealous of the honour of Christ, so anxious to preserve unimpaired the truth of the gospel, that he includes himself and his fellow-workers in the ministry, yea, even the angels of light, in this condemnation. "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, *let him be accursed.* As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, *let him be accursed.*"† Is it not surprising, that with such an inspired denunciation, men should so daringly add to, and take from, the words of eternal life.

Blessed Lord, impress deeply upon my mind these solemn, these awakening considerations. I feel the force of unbelief, oh! destroy its baneful influence. I am conscious of much spiritual blindness, Lord open my eyes to see wondrous things out of thy law. Preserve me from resting in the outward form of godliness. Cause me to experience its power. I am a member of thy visible Church. By baptism, when an infant, I was admitted into it. But, have I ever truly repented of sin? have I ever truly believed in thy name? have I ever from the heart obeyed the gospel? I know that without this spiritual renovation I am still dead before thee, resembling only the branch *in the vine*, which, bearing no fruit, shall be cut off and cast into the fire.‡ Almighty Saviour, put forth thy renewing power; convince and convert my soul; enlighten my mind, and enliven my affections; subdue my will, and subjugate all my powers to thy service and glory. Hasten thy work of mercy, and make me wholly thine, for thy dear Son's sake. Amen.

* Gal. v. 12, 10. † Gal. i. 8, 9. ‡ John xv. 1—6.

LXI.—ON THE APPROACH OF DEATH.

"Behold, thy days approach that thou must die."—Deut. xxxi. 14.

THE longest life, and the most useful one too, must draw to its close, for "death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."* Though Moses was forbidden to enter into the earthly, he was not excluded from the heavenly rest. The time drew near when he must die. This event did not take him by surprise. The Lord said unto Moses, "Behold, the days approach that thou must die." We cannot expect such a divine intimation. Yet still, enough is revealed in the word of God, and sufficient evidence is afforded to teach us, that "there is but a step between us and death."† "For what is our life? It is even a vapour, which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away?"‡

Nothing discovers our fallen state more than insensibility to eternal things, a neglect of the gospel, an unwearied search for happiness among the creatures, instead of from God, the Fountain of Living Water. While thousands of professing Christians are busying themselves for futurity, Death levels his dart, and lays the worldling in the dust.

How solemn was the message to Hezekiah: "Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live." How happy was its effect upon his mind. "Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the Lord."§ His prayer was heard, and fifteen years were added to his life.

"This year thou shalt die," said Jeremiah to the false Prophet Hananiah, "because thou hast taught rebellion against the Lord. So Hananiah the prophet died the same year, in the seventh month."‖

The Scriptures abound with warnings and encouragements.

* Rom. v. 12. † 1 Sam. xx. 3. ‡ James iv. 14.
§ 2 Kings xx. 1, 2.; Isa. xxxviii. 1, 2. ‖ Jer. xxviii. 16, 17.

"This year thou shalt die." Then let me feel and act as if I knew it were so ordered by him, in whose hands my breath is, and who hath appointed my time upon earth after the good pleasure of his will. My stay upon earth cannot be long. My sand is running quickly down. My shadow is lengthening apace, which proves that the sun is fast declining. Soon will the evening shades overspread me, and the night of death hide me from the eye of man.

How important, oh! how all-important is the question,—Am I prepared to die? Have I fled for refuge to Jesus, the sinner's friend? Do I believe with the heart unto righteousness? Have I the witness in *myself* that I am born of God? Is my heart renewed after the divine image, in righteousness and true holiness? Have I received the Spirit of adoption, a loving, filial, obedient, thankful, humble spirit, enabling me to cry, Abba, Father, through a lively faith in Christ my Saviour? For thus saith St. Paul: "ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."* If I truly believe in Christ, I have the Spirit of Christ, and I am a child of God. Then all the promises of God in Christ Jesus, to me are yea, and amen, sure and certain, and shall all have their blessed fulfilment in my salvation, and the display of the divine glory. Then I may exercise the assurance of faith, and hope; yea, the *full* assurance of these graces of the Spirit, if I have only a true and lively faith in the Son of God, a faith, working by love, purifying the heart, overcoming the world, and bringing the invisible glories of heaven, as realities before the mind; for "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."† O! what a glorious and glorifying grace is faith in a crucified Redeemer.

With these gospel views and with the inward experience of the grace of God, who would not welcome the words: "Behold, the days approach that thou must die." It is as if our heavenly Father

* Gal. iii. 26. † Heb. xi. 1.

should say, my beloved child, thou hast wandered long enough in this desert land. I have fed thee with the *true Bread* from heaven, and refreshed thee with water from the *smitten Rock*, Christ Jesus. I have given thee my ordinances and statutes. I have proved thee by manifold trials, that thou mightest know what was in thy heart. In the midst of all thy wanderings and rebellions, thy haltings and complainings, I did not forsake thee. I chastised thee with the rod of affliction. I brought thee low by deep repentance. I led thee into the valley of humiliation. I hid my face from thee for a little moment. I caused thee to loathe thyself, to cry for mercy, to seek my face. And then, when thy heart was broken and contrite, looking unto Jesus, and pleading, by earnest faith, the merit of his blood; I caused the beams of my grace to shine into thy soul. I gave thee a token of reconciliation, a Spirit of adoption. I enabled thee to sing for joy, and to go on with increasing vigour in the ways of truth and righteousness. Now, thy journey is nearly ended; my messenger is sent to convey thee home, to bring thee to thy Father's house, where are many mansions, where thy Saviour has prepared a place for thee, and where thou shalt be eternally blessed in his presence. Come, for all things are ready. Prepare to meet thy God. Enter into the joy of thy Lord. Doubt not my love. Fear not the enemy, for Christ and heaven are thine!

O! blessed Lord! grant that this sweet call may be impressed on my heart. May I live under the daily influence of thy love, and when I hear thee say, —"Surely I come quickly; Amen:" may my joyful heart respond, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."*

How solemn, how awakening should be the voice which speaks to me through the Scriptures of truth:

"PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD."†

Oh! that I may not only listen to, but obey, through grace, this voice of the Spirit, speaking to

* Rev. xxii. 20. † Amos iv. 12.

my heart and conscience; for thus saith the Lord, "Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it."* The dispensations of God have a voice; they speak either in mercy or in judgment. Lord make me conversant with death. Let me not shrink from looking into the grave, sanctified as it is, through the body of Jesus. If my body rest in hope of rising to a joyful resurrection, the grave will indeed be a place of repose from sins and sorrows, and the storms of life. But this cannot be, unless I am a believer of Jesus; for it is only those who sleep *in Jesus* that God will bring with him.† This glorious rising cannot take place except my body be now the temple of the Holy Ghost; for God will quicken our mortal bodies by his Spirit which dwelleth in us.‡ Oh! that Christ may dwell in my heart by faith; that the Spirit of Truth, the Comforter, may take up his abode within me. Then I shall have light, and love, and peace, and joy, and all the other blessings flowing from the Covenant of Grace.

"The sting of death is sin."§ It is sin which arms death with terrors. How dreadful is death to a soul, awakened to its consequences, at the period of dissolution. Agonies, inconceivably great, rend the soul, while writhing under the serpent's sting—unpardoned sin!

How sweetly serene is the penitent believer in Jesus, while standing on the brink of Jordan, in the hope of a joyful admission into the celestial Canaan. He dreads not the cold stream which rolls between him and the abodes of bliss. The hope of glory sustains him. Death comes as a messenger of mercy, divested of every evil, to conduct him out of time into eternity, to bring him into the presence of God his Saviour.

O! the blessedness of faith in the Atonement of Christ. It affords a firm foundation on which the soul can repose, amid the swellings of Jordan. Lord

* Micah vi. 9. † 1 Thess. iv. 14. ‡ Rom. viii. 11.
§ 1 Cor. xv. 56.

enable me truly to believe. Faith is thy gift.* To Thee do I look, and on Thee would I wait, for this precious gift of grace.

"PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD."

Almighty Saviour, do thou in mercy prepare my soul for a joyful meeting. Wash me from all my sins through thy cleansing blood. Clothe me with thy righteousness. Make me pure within. Give me the victory over sin, Satan, and the world. Enable me daily to come to Thee; to draw fresh supplies out of thy fulness, till I reach the Fountain-head of blessedness, even thine own self in thy everlasting kingdom.

"PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD."

Oh! may the solemn sound ever vibrate in my ears, and reach my inmost soul. The call is from above. It is God himself who speaks. O may I listen to his voice; bow in deep humiliation before the Cross, and, looking by faith to Him who hung upon it, receive a free and full forgiveness.

"God is a consuming fire."† The wicked, like stubble, shall be consumed, as in a moment, by the wrath of incensed justice.

"God is a consuming fire." The redeemed sinner is as gold. He loses nothing in the flame but the dross. Lord convert my soul. Make me as the precious gold, which becomes the purer by being in the furnace. Oh! may every affliction, every tribulation, endured in the body, tend, through thy love, to the purification of my soul; that when I hasten to meet thee at thy call in the eternal world, I may be found a new creature, a vessel of mercy, fitted, by the Spirit, for the Master's use.

"PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD."

Lord! may I joyfully accept thy gracious invitation. May I come in the fulness of faith and

* Eph. ii. 8. † Deut. iv. 24.; Heb. xii. 29.

hope, looking for, and hasting unto, the coming of the day of God. Why should I linger here? Why should I wish to remain a pilgrim in a world of woe?

O my soul! stretch out thy wings. Prepare for thy flight. Fix thy eyes upon the Sun of Righteousness; and, like the eagle, soar aloft beyond the shadows of this lower world. Angels beckon thee away. Dear departed friends invite thee to join their blessed company before the throne. A world of glory opens to thy view. Fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore, are at God's right hand.* Eternity is impressed upon the bliss of heaven. It is the royal signature, which cannot be effaced. O! then, why so backward to enter into the joy of thy Lord? Why so unwilling to drop thy chains, and enjoy the glorious liberty of the children of God? Does it not arise from the workings of unbelief? a latent love for earthly things? Lord remove this evil leaven from my heart. Complete thy work of mercy on my soul. Seal me by thy Spirit. Unite me to Thyself; and then, with the joy of faith, and with a heart of love, I shall hear Thy blessed call:—

"PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD."

"Gently, my Saviour, let me down,
To slumber in the arms of death;
I rest my soul on Thee alone,
E'en till my last expiring breath.

"Death's dreadful sting has lost its power;
A ransom'd sinner, sav'd by grace,
Lives but to die, and die no more,
Unveil'd to see Thy blissful face.

"Soon will the storm of life be o'er,
And I shall enter endless rest;
There, shall I live, to sin no more,
And bless Thy name, for ever bless'd.

* Psa. xvi. 11.

"Dear Saviour! let Thy Will be done;
Like yielding clay, I humbly lie;
May every murmuring thought be gone,
Most peacefully resign'd to die.

"Bid me possess sweet peace within,
Let child-like patience keep my heart;
Then shall I feel my heaven begin,
Before my spirit hence depart.

"Yes! and a brighter heaven still,
Awaits my soul, through His rich grace,
Who shall His word of Truth reveal,
Till call'd to sing His endless praise.

"Hasten thy chariot, God of Love,
And fetch me from this world of woe;
I long to reach those joys above,
And bid farewell to all below.

"There shall my raptur'd spirit raise,
Still louder notes than angels sing;
High glories to Immanuel's grace,
My God, my Saviour, and my King."

LXII.—PROPHETIC VIEWS OF THE GLORY OF THE MESSIAH'S KINGDOM.

"Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end."—Isa. ix. 7.

As the astronomer, through his powerful telescope, discovers worlds unseen by the unassisted eye, so the believer in Jesus, through faith in the prophecies and promises of God's word, beholds these glories to be revealed, which the eye of reason has not seen, and which the natural understanding cannot comprehend.

How delightful is the study of the Holy Scriptures. Faith is the key which unlocks the treasury

Jesus is the sum and substance of the Sacred Volume. Jesus is the Sun, placed in the centre of this system of grace and mercy; around whom, all his ransomed ones, move in willing obedience; from whom, they all derive their light and warmth; to whom, they are all attracted, by the powerful influence of his Spirit. But as in the natural, so in the spiritual system, there is a *counter*-tendency. If left for one moment to themselves, these ransomed ones would fly far off from the centre. Nothing keeps them in the path of holiness, but the attractive influence of the Sun of Righteousness. How experimentally true are the words of the poet:—

> "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it;
> Prone to leave the God I love—
> Here 's my heart—O take and seal it,
> Seal it from thy courts above."

How glorious, how happy, will that period be, when the "law in the members shall no longer war against the law of the mind;" when only one influence will be exerted, the influence of holy love, ever drawing the heart nearer and nearer to Jesus, the source and centre of felicity. This blessedness is now, *in part*, experienced by the true believer. It shall be more delightfully enjoyed in the reign of the millennium. But the fulness of this bliss is reserved for the heavenly state.

Is it not strange, that creatures, born for immortality, should be so indifferent to joys like these? Why is it so? The Bible tells us—because of unbelief. We are blinded by the God of this world. We are sunk in earth-born cares and pleasures. Like worms of the earth, we creep out of our holes, and crawl on the dust; when, like the eagle, we should be soaring upwards, till the earth disappear from our view.

Alas! how fallen are we! Sin has marred the image of our God, in which man was originally

created, and now we bear the image of the evil one; we are a compound of brute and devil.

Most unwelcome truth this, to the pride of the natural man. We would fain exalt ourselves to the highest pitch of excellence; at the very time, when the truth of God proclaims our guilt and misery: "He that committeth sin, is of the *devil*."* "Vain man would be wise, though man be born like a *wild ass's colt*."†

Let us, then, rejoice, that "salvation is of the Lord,"‡ that he desireth not the death of a sinner;§ that he has "so loved the world, as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."‖ Yes! let us rejoice, that the reign of darkness shall not always continue; for as sin hath reigned unto death, so grace shall reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.** This reign of grace is now progressing; for Jesus has all power in heaven and in earth.†† But his kingdom is opposed by wicked men and evil spirits. His people are now in an enemy's country. They have to buckle on their armour, to take their weapons, and to fight under the banners of the Captain of their salvation. *Without the pale of his Church*, are millions of Heathens and Mahomedans, who set themselves against the faithful soldiers of the Redeemer. *Within his Church*, are formalists, and hypocrites, who darken the truth, who despise the saints of the Most High; who belie their baptismal engagements, and who virtually unite with, and strengthen the hands of the infidel and the profane.

How precious is the book of God, which unfolds to us a brighter scene than this. Jesus, indeed, even now reigns in the hearts of his people. But, as yet they are only a little flock. Oh! how painful is the view of the present state of the world. Take,

* 1 John iii. 8. † Job xi. 12. ‡ Jonah ii. 9.
§ Ezek. xviii. 32. ‖ John iii. 16. ** Rom. v. 21.
†† Matt. xxviii. 18.

for example, one single large town, composed of one hundred thousand souls. As we walk in the streets, crowds of immortal beings press us on every side. Can we, in charity, hope that *one* in every twenty, is truly a child of God, a member of Christ?—not a nominal, but a *real* Christian?

Happy, indeed, were it so. We cannot read the hearts of men, but we can read their lives. Does the great mass of our population live as Christians should live? as those should live, who have been admitted by baptism into the Church of Christ? Alas! no, the world reigns in the hearts of thousands. The chains of worldly pleasure, profit, and power are thrown around their affections, and make them willing slaves to the God of this world. Oh! how much should the true believer be engaged in prayer for the outpouring of the Spirit; and in multiplied exertions, to stem the torrent of iniquity, and to promote the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom.

Three things are perceivable in Prophecy.

I. The prosperity of the Church, in its enlargement, holiness, and glory.

II. The outpouring of the Spirit, as the great means for promoting this state of earthly blessedness.

III. The spirit of prayer, which is promised, and shall be imparted, as the dawn of this predicted felicity.

The prophet Ezekiel,* in his description of the temple, which may refer to the millennial reign, beautifully describes the living water, issuing from the altar, emblematical of the Holy Spirit flowing to us, through the atonement of the Son of God. On either side of this river, which deepened as it flowed, so rich and full is the grace of God our Saviour, "were very many trees," full of fruit, "whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed;" showing, how every spiritual blessing grows on the banks of this celestial stream, which makes glad the city of God.

* Chap. xlvii.

The streamlet, which at first was ancle deep, increased as it flowed, till it became a mighty river, in which a man might swim.* How descriptive this of the Messiah's kingdom, which he himself compared, in its beginning, to the mustard-seed,† which, though the smallest of all seeds, grows to be the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds lodge in the branches of it. "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end."

The stone, which Nebuchadnezzar saw in vision, cut out without hands, and which became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth,‡ is the kingdom of the Messiah; the reign of Jesus shall be co-eval with eternity.

Every one who is taught of God, will feel the *necessity* of the Holy Spirit's influence; will rejoice in the *promise* that it shall be imparted; will acknowledge the *duty* of seeking for it; and will use the *means* for its attainment. O! that the dew of divine grace may descend upon the souls of all who labour to promote this happy reign of righteousness, till they arrive at that blessed abode where they shall have no need to say, "*drop from above.*"§

This truth is clear from divine revelation, that nothing but misery and desolation will overspread the earth, "until the Spirit be poured out from on high." Then "the wilderness shall be a fruitful field,"‖ showing the happy change in the Gentile world, and among all who know not God, whether Jews or Christians; and "the fruitful field," those cultivated parts of the earth where the gospel is planted, "shall be counted for a forest," at once, permanent and useful, for "judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness *remain* in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever."**

* Ezek. xlvii. 3, 5. ‡ See Matt. xiii. 31, 32.
‡ Dan. ii. 34, 35. § Herbert. ‖ Isa. xxxii. 15.
‖ Isa. xxxii. 15—18.

Who would not pray in the words which Jesus hath taught us: "Thy kingdom come."* Oh! that our hearts may unite with the inspired Apostle: "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."†

"The only wise God and our Saviour," has connected the means with the end. As of this, so of every other spiritual gift and grace, the Lord will be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them. To obtain this blessing, how fervent was Isaiah: "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof, as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God."‡

How blessed would be the result, did ministers and people thus unite in prayer, and endeavour to advance the glory of the Church, and the salvation of the world. To animate us to this delightful exercise, this concert of prayer, how gracious is the promise of Jehovah: "Behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth:....I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people.....And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer: and whiles they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord."§

This blessedness will, then, be preceded by the united, believing, fervent, unceasing prayers of the Church. But how abundant is the grace of God! "Before they call, I will answer: and whiles they are yet speaking, I will hear," is the voice of Him

* Matt. vi. 10.; Luke xi. 2. † Rev. xxii. 20.
‡ Isa. lxii. 1—3. § Isa. lxv. 17—25.

who never said unto the seed of Jacob, "Seek ye me in vain."*

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters."† Gospel blessings may well be called *waters*, from their rich abundance, from their purifying, fructifying, and refreshing quality. There is a sea of love and mercy, an ocean, into which the sins of believers are cast to appear no more for ever. "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."‡ "In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve."§ If such blessings were vouchsafed to the ancient Church, when brought out of her captivity, what mercies are now in store for the Church of Christ militant, upon earth, when the Spirit shall be poured out in rich effusions upon all her members, when "judgment shall run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream."‖

Then "wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of our times."** "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased."†† Hostile nations "shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks;" they shall learn war no more:‡‡ "for the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."§§ Then Jesus will "speak peace to the heathen; and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth."‖‖

And will this glory rise upon our earth, shrouded as it is with darkness? It will, for thus saith the Lord: "From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and *in every place* incense

* Isa. xlv. 19. † Isa. lv. 1. ‡ Micah vii. 19.
§ Jer. l. 20. ‖ Amos v. 24. ** Isa. xxxiii. 6.
†† Dan. xii. 4. ‡‡ Isa. ii. 4. §§ Hab. ii. 14.
‖‖ Zech. ix. 10.

shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts."*

The Jews shall then adore their long-neglected Messiah. Now, they are suffering under the fulfilment of this righteous judgment: "The children of Israel shall abide many days (already amounting to nearly eighteen hundred years) without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice." But then, at this glorious period, when Jesus shall take unto him his great power, and reign as King supreme, it is graciously promised, "Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and DAVID THEIR KING; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness *in the latter days*."†

How inexpressibly precious are these prophecies respecting our fallen race. They are like the rainbow on the cloud. They assure us of mercy; that we shall not be destroyed by a deluge of wrath. But while they breathe loving-kindness, they call upon us to pray, to praise, to work with all our might, that we may become the honoured instruments in the hand of our God, for helping forwards, and hastening this reign of grace. God is pleased, in general, to work by means. He could preserve us without food, but this is not his appointment. He could bring about the world's regeneration by a single word, but this is not his plan. The Church of Christ is the medium through which he is pleased to communicate his blessings. For this end, he has appointed his ministers, as his ambassadors, as his stewards, as his labourers, as his watchmen. He commands all his people to work while it is day; to put forth all their powers, ere the night of death cometh.

"There are two little words in our language," remarks that lamented Missionary, the Rev. John Williams, "which I always admired, *try* and *trust*. You know not what you *can* or *cannot* effect, until you *try;* and if you make your trials in the exercise

* Mal. i. 11. † Hosea iii. 4, .

of *trust* in God, mountains of imaginary difficulties will vanish as you approach them, and facilities will be afforded which you never anticipated."

What an encouragement is this for the Christian labourer. When Christ said, "Stretch forth thine hand;" through faith, the man stretched out his *withered* hand, "and it was restored whole, like as the other."* Let us implicitly obey the injunctions of our Lord. With the command he graciously imparts the power to labour, and the will to serve. He, who gives the command, makes his people willing in the day of his power. He imparts his consolations. He places underneath the everlasting arms. He enables them to endure unto the end; and then gives them a crown of life, which fadeth not away.

If this be the end of the righteous, believers should not be afraid to die. Jesus hath declared, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."† Blessed revelation! Jesus, the Saviour, the Friend of sinners, hath the keys of the invisible world. If we wanted to enter into some place of security, or happiness, we should feel easy if we knew that the keys were in the possession of a *Friend*, who dearly loved us, and sought our highest felicity. We should not fear a repulse, when we came to knock for admittance. But how different would be our feelings, if these keys were in the hands of an *implacable enemy*, who sought our destruction; or in the hands of a sovereign, against whom we were living in open rebellion, and from whom we could expect nothing but death.

That a period of grace and glory, such as the Church has never yet experienced, will bless our world, is clearly revealed in the Scriptures of truth; but to determine the manner and circumstances of the reign of Christ is not required. "Secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our chil-

* Matt. xii. 13. † Rev. i. 18.

dren."* In the midst of tribulation, we have prophecies of glory, and promises of rest, to cheer us. We may never live to see those days of the Son of Man; but we may now, by faith, enjoy his presence in our souls; the indwelling of his Spirit in our hearts. We may now rest in the love of God; repose on the faithfulness of Christ; and be refreshed with joy and peace through the Holy Ghost.

If this be our happy experience, we need not perplex our minds, whether the reign of the Messiah will be personal or spiritual. We know that Christ shall "appear *the second time*, without sin, unto salvation.† We know that he will come "with clouds, and every eye shall see him."‡ But the mode of his coming must be determined by the glorious event, when, "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God."§

O! Almighty Saviour, enlighten the eyes of my understanding by the beams of thy Spirit. Enable me rightly to discern the truths of thy word. Suffer me not to reject thy revelations of glory, because I cannot comprehend them; nor to cavil at the mysteries of thy grace, because I cannot explore them. Make my soul as a little child, humble, teachable, and obedient to thy will. Give me a heart to mourn over sin, both in myself and others; a heart to rejoice over thy mercies; a heart to love thee supremely, for all that thou art to me, as my present and everlasting Portion.

O do thou in mercy keep me from the evil that is in the world; from the errors which, like hemlock, grow in the gospel field;—thy visible Church. Preserve me from being led away by the opinions of men, however great in name, renowned for learning, or extolled for piety, if such opinions be repugnant to the plain declarations of thy word. Give me courage to reject, whatever opposes thy Truth, though it be

* Deut. xxix. 29.; See Isa. xi.; Rom. xi.; Rev. xx.
† Heb. ix. 28. ‡ Rev. i. 7. § 1 Thess. iv. 16.

silvered over with age, or be sanctioned by ancient Councils. May I never forget that I must be judged at thy tribunal; that the words which thou hast spoken shall judge me at the last day. Teach me, then, O Lord, to cease from man; to place my whole reliance upon Thee; to follow, through the teaching of thy Spirit, the light of thy holy word.

O! Thou, who art the Light of the world, be thou my guide. Wherever I see thy footsteps, there may I plant my own. Shield me from the subtle attacks of Satan. Guard me against the flatteries and frowns of the world; and, when brought by thy grace to the brink of Jordan, conduct me in mercy through the rolling stream, till I reach thy blissful presence in the celestial Canaan. All praise to Sovereign Grace.

LXIII.—THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE.

"Let no man deceive himself."—1 Cor. iii. 18.

WHAT a compound of contrarieties is this heart of mine! Heavenly Father! how wonderful is thy forbearance; how amazing thy long-suffering. I pray unto thee for *humility*. Thou graciously hearest my request; and puttest me into a situation where my pride is mortified and wounded. Do I then rejoice at perceiving such an answer to my prayer? Alas! no. How are my feelings hurt; how do fretful complainings fill my breast. Lord have mercy on so weak, so wretched a creature, and make me more sensible of the mercies I pray for, and more resigned to thy will.

I pray for the grace of *self-denial*. In answer to my supplication thou givest me an opportunity of exercising this grace. Do I bless thee for this token of thy love? Do I cheerfully embrace this opportunity for self-denial? Ah! no. My heart makes a

thousand excuses for a little longer self-indulgence, saying, as Lot did with respect to Zoar, "Is it not a little one?"* Oh! how numberless are the arts of self-deception. How slowly do we attain to the knowledge of ourselves! Lord increase my faith. Subdue my corruptions. Conquer my stubborn will. Cast me into the mould of the gospel, and make me wholly thine.

The danger of self-deception increases in proportion to the magnitude of the thing about which we are deceived. The salvation of the soul is the chief concern of man; to be deceived on this point, is eternally fatal.

The Scriptures divide all mankind into two great classes, the spiritually and the carnally minded. The one walk by faith, the other by sight: the one, are the children of God; the other, the children of the devil. The former have their affections set on things above; the latter delight in every thing earthly and sensual; their views are bounded by time; their interests are founded on the shadow of a moment. Strange as it may appear, yet, upon this airy nothing, the men of the world build their hopes, which vanish like the midnight dream. Our Saviour has described by parable, the character and end of the rich worldling.†

When the man was promising to himself years of ease and pleasure, the sentence went forth to cut the cumberer down. "Thou fool! *this night* thy soul shall be required of thee."‡

A reflecting mind, impressed with the value of eternal things, mourns over this infatuation. What man would dare to sleep on the brink of a loose and crumbling precipice; or to stand on the summit of a mast, during the heaving of the vessel in a storm? And yet, thus rash is the man who trusts in his riches, and prides himself on worldly greatness. He leans on a vapour; he grasps a shadow; he sinks into destruction!

* Gen. xix. 20. † See Luke xii. 16—21. ‡ Ver. 20.

No character is more common than the carnally-minded. It is the character of all the unregenerated part of mankind, whether among Jews, and Heathens, or the baptised members of the visible Church. Actions speak more forcibly than words. They are the test of character. Like fruit upon the tree, they show the nature of the man, while motives, like the sap, are hidden from our view.

Faith, producing love and obedience, characterises the trees of righteousness of the Lord's planting; but are these graces of the Spirit to be found in the hearts of the worldly? Do we not there behold, as evidenced by the life, sensuality, and enmity to God?

Such persons, if *rich*, are honoured; if *generous*, are applauded; if possessed of *power*, are courted and flattered. But what said our Lord: "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you!"* "That which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God."†

The world is full of such characters, and the visible Church has been contaminated in every age, by men who love filthy lucre, the lust of power, or the lust of the flesh. Paul mourned over a Demas, who loved this present world.‡ John over a Diotrephes, who loved to have the pre-eminence;§ and the early Fathers of the Christian Church, over those who stained by impurity the so-called *angelic* state of celibacy. The Church of Rome is proverbial for these evils. Oh! that our Reformed Churches may ever shine in the beauty of holiness, and by a weanedness from the world. But alas! the world has crept into the Church. Hence arises the drooping state of our once flourishing vine. Lord look down from heaven, behold and visit this Vine. Water it with the the dew of grace. "Revive thy work in the midst of the years."‖

The history of the gospel is chiefly the history

* Luke vi. 26. † Luke xvi. 15. ‡ 2 Tim. iv. 10.
§ 3 John 9. ‖ Hab. iii. 2.

of Christ's conquest over the spirit of the world. And the number of true Christians, is only the number of those who, following the Spirit of Christ, have lived contrary to the spirit of the world. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."* "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world."† This is the language of the whole New Testament. This is the mark of Christianity: "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."‡

O! my soul, as standing on the borders of eternity, weigh well these things. Seek after heavenly wisdom, to know thyself. Dread self-deception. Prepare to meet thy God.

There are a thousand ways whereby we may deceive ourselves. Vices, through the artifice of Satan, are decked with rose-buds, and concealed under specious titles. He puts a fascinating mask upon the face of crime, and thus, like the angler, hides the hook. The wretched sinner, like the silly fish, sees not the snare. Like the maniac, he imagines himself a king, while held in fetters, though his sceptre is a straw!

Are not such characters objects of pity? Should they not be subjects for prayer? O! my soul, feel the pulse of thy affections. Do they beat for Christ? Is he thy Portion, thy Eternal All? If so, then the Spirit of Christ and of glory resteth upon thee. God numbers thee amongst his beloved people, his chosen ones, his jewels. But if thou art a stranger to the covenant of grace; if thou art unacquainted with Christ as the hope of glory; if thou hast never felt the plague of inward corruption; if thou hast never come to Christ as a poor heavy laden sinner, nor taken his yoke upon thee; if, in short, thou art not renewed in the spirit of thy mind, striving against sin, crucifying the flesh, renouncing the world, and perfecting holiness in the fear of God; then art thou, however honoured, applauded, or courted by the

* Rom. viii. 9. † 1 John v. 4. ‡ Col. iii. 3.

world, an enemy of God, a child of wrath, an heir of hell!

O! thou eternal Spirit of all grace and truth, display thy saving power in my salvation. Convince me of sin. Reveal me to the mighty Saviour. Lead me to the garden of Gethsemane, to the hill of Calvary, that there I may behold the bloody sweat, and hear the dying groans, of my crucified Redeemer. There, in the sacred mount, melt my heart to penitence and love, and make me wholly, and entirely thine.

A self-righteous spirit is a spirit of self-delusion. "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."* This is a standing truth of the gospel, which ages cannot alter, though ages past and present have wrought hard to pluck it from the word of life.

Who, then, can be saved? The gospel tells us: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."† Faith in Christ opens the storehouse of heaven. Faith lays hold on Him who is the Possessor of all things. This is the mighty instrument which baffles all the arts of Satan, and the malice of the world. It shows the sinner to himself, and leads him to his Saviour.

When Paul, by faith, beheld the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and himself, as the chief of sinners;‡ when he beheld by faith, the preciousness of Christ, and the fulness, the fitness, and the freeness of his great salvation; he was overwhelmed with the view.

Then he renounced his boasted virtues, his legal righteousness, and desired only, that he might win Christ, and be found in him.§ Then he gloried in nothing save in Christ crucified.‖ Then his wish was, to be dissolved, and to be with Christ.** He hasted to the cross, and there, through faith, he washed away his sins. He seized, by faith, the robe of righteousness which his Saviour wrought, and wrapped

* Gal. ii. 16. † Acts xvi. 31.
‡ Rom. vii. 13.; 1 Tim. i. 15. § Phil. iii. 8, 9.
‖ Gal. vi. 14. ** 2 Cor. v. 1—10.; Phil. i. 21.

it round his naked soul. He sought for grace to sanctify him, body, soul, and spirit; to prepare him for sufferings in his Master's service, to preserve him unto eternal glory. He sought and found the blessing. Or, rather, Jesus, in Sovereign Love, sought *him out*, when hastening on his bloody errand to Damascus,* and made him a vessel of mercy, a monument of grace, "a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." Was Saul, the persecuting murderer, converted into a patient lamb? Then, O sinner, fear not, Jesus ever lives. His grace can also save thee. How wonderful is the operation of grace. The churches of Judea, heard the wonderful story: "He which persecuted us in times past, now *preacheth the faith* which once he destroyed. And," adds the Apostle, "they glorified God in me."†

God ever gives his witness to the faithful preaching of the gospel, by making it the instrument of turning many to righteousness; and Satan gives his witness to it, by opposing it with all his might. This arch enemy well knows the force and efficacy of preaching the doctrine of the atonement; of a free justification by faith, without the deeds of the law; of the work of the Holy Spirit on the heart; and against such preaching, he plants his artillery. He enlists, not only the worldly and profane, the infidel and the sceptic into his service, but also the formalist and the moral; yea, even some in the ministerial office, who, blinded by prejudice, think that they ought, like Saul of Tarsus, to do many things contrary to such preaching as this.

Do not facts attest this painful statement? We never find a moral preacher derided by the world; neither do we see a moral preacher bringing souls to Christ. He may, by dint of eloquence, arrest the profligate in his course, and lead him to a momentary reflection; but all his powers of rhetoric cannot change his heart.

* Acts ix. † Gal. i. 23, 24.

This conquest is reserved for the faithful preaching of the Cross. Christ crucified is the blessed magnet, which draws perishing souls to happiness and heaven. The gospel is "the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth,"* though esteemed foolishness by the worldly-wise. Blessed are they, who hold forth, by their doctrine, and in their lives, the gospel of the grace of God. They may be called to endure the wrath of Satan, and the hatred of the world; the reproach of the formalist, and the anathemas of ecclesiastical rulers; but they shall have the smiles of Christ here, and their portion in his kingdom, though burnt at the stake, as heretics unfit to live.

Blessed be God, against this *true* Church, the gates of hell shall not prevail. The waves of trouble may dash against it, but it cannot be overthrown, because it is founded upon the Rock, Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God. The work of redemption is the work of omnipotence. The word of God is mighty in operation. It is as a fire to consume the chaff of error in doctrine, and the dross of sin in practice. It is as a hammer to break in pieces the adamantine heart of the rebellious sinner. It is the wisdom of God, and the power of God.

O! my soul, hast thou experienced this transforming grace, through a believing reception of Christ crucified? "Examine thyself whether thou be in the faith; prove thy ownself."† Rest not in forms and ceremonies, however excellent. "Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils."‡ Let all thy hope and confidence be in God.

True religion, such as God will approve, is not confined to particular times and places, but, if truly received into the heart, will show its influence in every place, in every part of the conduct. It is like the sap of a living tree, which extends to the most distant boughs, and circulates through the smallest fibres. Not only actions, but words; not only words, but

* Rom. i. 16. † 2 Cor. xiii. 5. ‡ Isa. ii. 22.

thoughts; yea, motives, affections, and desires, are guided by the law of truth, and influenced by the law of love.

True religion consists in the right dispositions of a heart, sanctified by the Spirit of Christ; a heart, where self is humbled, where Jesus reigns, where holiness is promoted.

When the renewed soul is enabled, through the power of the Spirit, not only to discern the exceeding sinfulness of sin, but also to forsake it: when it is strengthened by faith to overcome the world, and to trust in the righteousness of Christ alone for salvation; not pleading its own good works, those never-failing fruits of faith, but the riches of redeeming love: when the renewed soul is brought, through the power of the Holy Ghost, to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, in his temper, mind, and spirit, being clothed with humility, beautified by meekness, and adorned with charity: when thus renewed and born again, living upon Christ by faith, and being spiritually united to him, as the member to the head, the soul can cast itself in deep contrition at the foot of the Cross, bewailing the imperfections of its holiest services, and imploring pardon and acceptance through the atoning sacrifice and all-perfect righteousness of the Redeemer: then is that soul truly a member of Christ, a child of God, and shall soon be made the happy inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.

Is this the prevailing character of baptised Christians? Does the visible Church thus shine in the beauty of holiness? Are all her members temples of the Holy Ghost? Would it not be so, if all were spiritually born again in baptism, since St. Paul hath declared that "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance?"* O! it is well to have the mind scripturally enlightened, at a time when many would substitute the doctrines of men for the truth of God.

Some persons are apt to confound the *sign* with the thing *signified*, and thus to make the ordinance

* Rom. xi. 29.

of baptism and spiritual regeneration to be one and the same operation; that is, that every child sprinkled with water is *invariably* born again of the Spirit.

"The *agency* of the Holy Ghost, when he testifies of Christ and glorifies him, is quite distinct from the MEANS which conveys the testimony. This important distinction is carefully noted in Scripture. In confirmation of this truth, it is written, that the Lord opened the heart of Lydia to attend unto the things which were spoken by St. Paul. In this instance we plainly see the man of God preaching Christ, and all that is needful for the conversion of the soul on one hand; on the other, the God of all grace exercising his powerful influence, by which the Apostle's preaching obtained success."*

Preaching the Gospel is a divinely-appointed means of grace; so also are the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper; but, as in the former, the *agency* of the Holy Ghost is quite distinct from the *means*; so it is with respect to the two latter. Many heard Paul preach with as much power as Lydia did;† but they remained unconverted, and why? because of the hardness of their hearts! Many receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper without benefit, being destitute of true faith. And multitudes are baptised in the name of Christ, who never manifest their love to him, being still in the bond of iniquity; for the agency of the Holy Ghost can alone render the means *effectual*, and not any power or virtue vested in the priest, or in the sacramental rite, *apart from the Sovereign grace of God.*

The Holy Spirit's influence must, then, ever be earnestly implored, through faith in the name of Christ, whenever we hear the gospel preached, and whenever the sacraments are administered. We must cease from man. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the *Lord gave* to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase."‡

* Venn. † Acts xvi. 13, &c. ‡ 1 Cor. iii. 5, 6.

How different is the language and the doctrine of the Apostles, from their boasted successors in the Church of Rome. Oh! that our Reformed Churches may ever be preserved from Papal errors; and, like the primitive Church of Jerusalem, continue "steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."* Then will a divine blessing rest upon the labours of faithful ministers, "and much people will be added unto the Lord."† Ordinances will then become as wells of salvation, out of which we shall draw, by faith, the living water, through the blessed influence of the Holy Ghost.

"In and by baptism, *believers* have sealed to them a covenant right in the glorious privileges of membership in Christ, adoption into God's family as children, and inheritance in the kingdom of heaven. And baptism, which does thus in a *covenant-way* seal these privileges to *believers*, does, in what was called a *charter-way*, seal them to *baptised infants*: so that it lies upon themselves, coming to years, to make out their claim to these things by a true faith wrought in them by the Spirit of God."‡

"Inseparable baptismal and spiritual regeneration is the opus operatum of Popery....Regeneration by promise, *sealed* in the baptism of infants, and wrought out in faith in their subsequent lives, is the doctrine of God's word, and fully loaded with all the rich blessings of the gospel of Christ to every real believer.....It is a wide-wasting mischief to make baptism and regeneration the same thing; this is substantially to ascribe to the minister who baptises that power which the Scriptures exclusively appropriate to God,§ and it is directly to contradict the article of the Church of England which calls baptism a sign of regeneration, conveying grace and spiritual blessings: a sign and the thing signified cannot be the same thing. And yet is there in the promise of God sufficient warrant both for the prayer of faith, and

* Acts ii. 42. † Acts xi. 24. ‡ Walker. § John i. 12.

after that prayer for the thanksgiving of faith. For, on the other hand, God's ordinances are never bare signs. If faith be absent, they greatly increase guilt in the partakers of them.....If regeneration be thus connected with baptism, how is it that we see so many baptised children so manifestly unregenerate. He that is *born of God overcometh the world, worketh righteousness, loves the children of God*, and has his affections set on things above; and we see, alas! innumerable multitudes that are baptised, to whom none of these characters belong. The real root of this grievous failure of God's ordinance is man's unbelief....The sacrament is made void through unbelief. To save and to bless there must be more than the sign.....'Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.' Heb. iv. 1."*

"Let us suppose for a moment, that baptism is the new birth, and that baptism was the point which our Lord so strongly insisted on, (in his discourse to Nicodemus.)† Why should our Lord, when explaining and enforcing his first assertion, so carefully distinguish between water-baptism and the operations of the Holy Spirit: 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water *and of the Spirit*, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' Here, admitting that he insisted on the necessity of being born of water, he insisted also on being born of the Spirit, in order to convince Nicodemus that he spoke not of an outward and carnal, but of an inward and spiritual change." "Some distinguished characters are very strong and positive upon this point, viz., Baptismal Regeneration. The chief source of the error is, that men do not distinguish between a change of *state*, and a change of *nature*. Baptism is a change of state; for by it we become entitled to all the blessings of the New Covenant; but it is not a change of *nature*. A change of nature *may* be communicated at the time that the ordinance

* Bickersteth. † John iii.

is administered; but the ordinance itself does not communicate it now, any more than in the apostolic age. Simon Magus was baptised, and yet remained 'in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity,' as much after his baptism as he was before. And so it may be with us. And this is an infallible proof, that the change which the Scriptures call the new birth, does not always and of necessity accompany this sacred ordinance. As the circumcision of the heart did not always accompany the circumcision of the flesh, so neither does the renovation of the soul always accompany the outward rite of baptism, which shadows it forth; and if only our opponents will distinguish the sign from the thing signified, and assign to each its proper place and office, there will be an immediate end of this controversy."*

These quotations from Walker, Bickersteth, and Simeon, are in unison with each other; but what renders them valuable, is their accordance with the Holy Scriptures.

O! my soul, pray earnestly to be guided into all truth. Guard against the influence of those, who would draw thee from the simplicity of the gospel. It is most important, not only to know, but to be *established*, in the truth as it is in Jesus.†

In the transactions of life, one false step is often attended with temporal losses; but in religion, false doctrine, producing wrong conduct as its natural fruit, endangers the salvation of the soul. Errors in doctrine are always dangerous, and never more so, than when they are disguised and clothed with the name of truth. Let me, then, never trifle with a subject which involves my present comfort and future felicity.

Am I born again? What question can be more important. Am I a child of God, or am I not? There are some who will say, "You are." If I ask, When was I made one of God's children? They will reply, "When you were baptised." Must I,

* Simeon. † 2 Pet. i. 12.

then, rest satisfied with this answer? Must I conclude that I am adopted into the family of God, through the baptism of water, without any internal evidence of the baptism of the Spirit? Must I take to myself the precious promises of the new covenant, if destitute of a new heart? Must I call heaven my home, if my affections are glued to this world? Surely I ought to look further into this weighty subject, lest, like the foolish virgins, when the cry is made, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him," I should only have the lamp of an outward profession, while destitute of the oil of an inward and spiritual grace.*

John the Baptist, when showing the superior nature of the Baptism of Christ, "*He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire;*" adds, "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will *throughly* purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."† How strikingly is the mixed character of the visible Church described by this simile. He who runs may read, except his eyes be blinded through unbelief, and prejudice, and error.

What can be more awakening, than the declaration which Jesus made to *circumcised* Jews, and therefore equally applicable to *baptised* Christians, when he was commending the faith of the Roman Centurion: "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not *in Israel*. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven: but the *children of the kingdom*, (awful thought,) shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."‡ Surely this should make every Christian to tremble, yea, all who rest their hopes of heaven upon their Church membership, and their baptismal regeneration, if they be unrenewed in the

* Matt. xxv. 1—13. † Matt. iii. 11, 12.; Luke iii. 16, 17.
‡ Matt. viii. 10—12.

spirit of their mind. "The children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness." Searching words indeed!

The Church, it is true, received me when an infant, into her maternal bosom, by the outward rite of baptism. I was then signed with the sign of the cross, as a badge of my profession, that I might become, through grace, a faithful soldier of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit was supplicated for me, and, in the *language of hope and charity*, I was admitted to the privileges of the gospel covenant, as a regenerated member of the universal Church. But, though thus received, much remained to be done. When come to years of discretion, I was taught by the Church, that all who truly receive the inward and spiritual grace of baptism, must die unto sin, and live unto righteousness; must *repent* and *believe* the gospel; that I am *bound* to perform, in *my own person*, the promises and vows *then made for me* by my sureties, and that if such performance be left undone, I am, by a natural inference, unregenerated, and uninterested in the blessings of the baptismal covenant.

That my mind might be deeply impressed with this truth, the Church puts this question to my conscience: "Dost thou not think, that thou art BOUND to *believe*, and *to do*, as they have promised for thee?"

In the same spirit of hope and charity, the Church teaches me to say: "Yes, verily, and by God's help *so I will*. And I *heartily thank* our heavenly Father, that he hath called me to this state of salvation through Jesus Christ our Saviour. And I pray unto God to give me his grace, that I may continue in the same unto my life's end."

Truly this is the *language* of a regenerate heart; language which only such a heart can *sincerely* utter in the presence of a heart-searching God.

All who can say from the heart, in sincerity and truth, not trusting to their own strength, but to the

grace of God, that they will renounce the devil and all his works; the pomps and vanity of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh; that they will believe all the articles of the Christian faith, and keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of their life: and whose lives are agreeable to their profession, are truly the members of Christ, the children of God, and the inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.

But, I would ask, is this the *heart-felt* language, is this the *sincere* determination, of every baptised child? Experience, alas! says no, for a tree is known by its fruits.

If, while repeating these solemn vows and promises made *for them* at their baptism, and ratified by *themselves* at confirmation, the works of the devil are practised; the pomps and vanity of the world idolised; the sinful lusts of the flesh indulged; the truths of the gospel, *practically*, disbelieved; and the will and commandments of God, *habitually* transgressed: can such characters be considered as *regenerated*, in the *saving* sense of the term? Though sprinkled with water, and baptised in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and thus admitted as members of the *visible* Church, can they, while thus enslaved by sin, be the very members incorporate in the mystical body of Christ, which is the blessed company of all faithful people; and be also heirs, through hope, of his everlasting kingdom?

Surely a broad distinction must be made between real and nominal Christians, if we would avoid a strong delusion. If the blind lead the blind, it is no marvel, if both fall into the ditch.*

"Oh! let us understand what regeneration really is, and the self-righteous will shrink from claiming it in baptism, and the spiritually-minded will regard baptism as a real help to holiness, humility, and love."

* Matt. xv. 14.; Luke vi. 39.

From all this, it is evident, that throughout her beautiful liturgical services, from the baptismal font, to the burial of the dead, the Church of England provides for the strengthening and refreshing of *real* believers, not for the formal services of her worldly members. She could not furnish two liturgies—one for the sincere, and the other for the hypocrite. If any of her members draw nigh to God with their mouths, while their hearts are far from him, *they*, and not *the Church*, will be answerable for such hypocrisy. Though baptised when infants, and thus brought into a covenant relation with God, we are *bound*, when arrived at riper years, to repent and believe the gospel. If we live and die impenitent and unbelieving, we shall never be admitted into the temple above. Great, indeed, is the delusion of those who place their hopes of heaven on the performance of outward forms, while destitute of the Spirit of Christ. And great is the responsibility of those ministers who, to such characters cry, peace, peace, when there is no peace.

"Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life; and *few* there be that find it;"* are the words of Him to whom all hearts are open, and from whom no secrets are hid. Surely this declaration should awaken all our solicitude, when it is added, "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and *many* there be which go in thereat."†

Am I now walking with the many, or the few? How important is self-knowledge. How dangerous is self-deception! Oh! that I may have grace to detect the deceits of Satan, the corruptions of my heart, the temptations of the world. The door of mercy is still open. The God of all grace is waiting to be gracious. Jesus is pointing to his hands, his feet, his side. The Spirit bids me fly from the wrath to come; to hasten to the Ark of the everlasting Covenant. O! my soul, why linger, like Lot in

* Matt. vii. 14. † Matt. vii. 13.; Luke xiii. 24.

Sodom?* "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come."† The Saviour says, "Come, for all things are now ready;" the feast is provided; "and yet there is room."‡ God the Father, Son, and Spirit, the Eternal Jehovah, invites thee to happiness and glory; he calls thee to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, where saints and angels are the guests; yea, where He Himself will be thy everlasting Portion.

LXIV.—THE DESIRE OF MORE.

"He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase. This is also vanity."—Eccles. v. 10.

Covetousness, in the language of inspiration, is *the desire of having more.* If we are habitually desirous of riches, for *their own sake*, we are, in the estimation of heaven, covetous persons, idolaters, the servants of mammon. Our station may be exalted; our profession of religion may be outwardly strict, but still our destruction is sure; for Jesus has pronounced the sentence, "How hard is it for them that *trust in riches* to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."§

"Man is a restless thing: still vain and wild,
Lives beyond sixty, nor outgrows the child:
His hurrying lusts still break the sacred bound,
To seek new pleasures on forbidden ground,
And buy them all too dear. Unthinking fool,
For a short dying joy to sell a deathless soul!
'T is but a grain of sweetness they can sow,
And reap the long sad harvest of immortal woe.

* Gen. xix. 16. † Rev. xxii. 17. ‡ Luke xiv. 17, 22. § Mark x. 24, 25.

Another tribe toil in a different strife,
And banish all the lawful sweets of life,
To sweat and dig for gold, to hoard the ore,
Hide the dear dust yet darker than before,
And never dare to use a grain of all the store.
Happy the man that knows the value just
Of earthly things, nor is enslav'd to dust.
'T is a rich gift the skies but rarely send
To favourite souls."*

Riches and destruction are not necessarily connected together, for we read that "Abram was *very rich*, in cattle, in silver, and in gold."† But riches have a tendency to draw away the heart from God, by opening the door to all earthly gratifications, as in the case of Solomon; by leading the possessor to the summit of power; by throwing around the rich, the splendid appendages of grandeur. Riches and humility, much wealth and great self-denial, are seldom found together. As "money answereth all things,"‡ in the estimation of the worldly, so it is sought after, above all things spiritual and eternal.

Nothing can be more opposed to each other than covetousness and contentment. Thousands labour to be rich, hoping thereby to enjoy the sweets of quietude, but when they have reached the object of their wishes, *the desire of more*, like "the horse-leach," which cries, "Give, give,"§ urges them onwards, till, not unfrequently, like the ponderous avalanche, they roll down the precipice, and are shivered to pieces in the vale below.

In this commercial country, where Satan has set up his golden image, instances are not wanting to exemplify this truth. "The love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."‖ How many families have to mourn over the *desire of more*,—that insati-

* Watts. † Gen. xiii. 2. ‡ Eccles. x. 19.
§ Prov. xxx. 15. ‖ 1 Tim. vi. 10.

able thirst for wealth, which brings its own curse along with it; for "they that *will be rich*," at all hazards, and by all means, "fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition."*

The remedy for this evil is given us by St. Paul, "*Godliness with contentment* is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content."† How precious is "godliness with contentment;" an efficacious antidote to the evil of covetousness.

The advice of the Apostle is equally valuable: "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."‡

The example of St. Paul was in unison with his precept: "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith to be content*. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where, and in all things, I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need." And then, he lets us into the secret of all this elevation above the changing varieties of time:—"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."§ This is the great secret, which is hid from the rich formalist, as well as from the rich worldling. The grace of Christ in the hearts of his people, is the strengthening remedy against the covetous desire of more. He can give the blessing of peace in the absence of plenty. He can impart contentment, yea, even rejoicing, in a time of famine. "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines;" though "the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat;" though "the

* 1 Tim. vi. 9. † 1 Tim. vi. 6—8. ‡ Heb. xiii. 5, 6.
§ Phil. iv. 11—13.

flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."*

Can the world, with all its promises, confer such blessedness on its votaries? In the season of privation, do we find the worldly, calm, patient, and thankful? Is no repining word suffered to escape their lips? No hard thoughts of God permitted to invade their hearts? This fruit of contentment is not found on nature's ground. It is the product of godliness; the work of Christ in the soul.

To those who are observant of the signs of the times, and of the sins of the nation, it must be apparent that the love of money, like a fatal worm, is gnawing at the root of our prosperity.

The men of the world behold the withering process, and ascribe it to natural causes, though evidently baffled to discover the true one. The believer in Jesus, with the Bible in his hand, sees with unclouded clearness the source of all the evil. Covetousness, or the desire of more, eating, like a canker, upon the vitals of our religion, is the crying evil of the Church and of the world. The love of money insinuates itself into every heart, under every form. Economy, prudence, foresight, and forethought, claim a place in the judgment and conduct. They approach us as friends, as auxiliaries to our comforts, while they are, too often, enemies in disguise. Thus Satan can transform himself into an angel of light, more effectually to deceive. Had he come to Eve in his proper character, as a *fallen spirit*, she would have dreaded his approach; but he came under a guise which caused her no alarm, and thus the poison stole into her heart. She was deceived;—and fell! She believed the lying spirit in the serpent, instead of the God of Truth and Love. Her sin was a compound of unbelief and rebellion.

O! my soul, watch and pray, lest thou enter into temptation.† Beware of the golden bait which

* Hab. iii. 17, 18. † Mark xiv. 38.; Luke xxii. 46.

covers the fatal hook. To his own people, the Almighty said: "Behold, I have refined thee, but not with *silver*." The heart is seldom *refined* by the accumulation of wealth. "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction."*

To apostate Judah, Jehovah uttered, by his prophet, words of judgment: "Thou hast forsaken thy people, the house of Jacob, because.....their land is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures; their land is also full of horses; neither is there any end of their chariots: their land also is full of *idols*.....The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day,.....when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth."†

How true are the words of Solomon: "Riches profit not in the day of wrath."‡ Covetousness and idolatry are so closely allied, that St. Paul declares, "No covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."§

The proud city of Tyre, for her covetousness and idolatry, was doomed to destruction: "Tyrus did build herself a strong hold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets. Behold, the Lord will cast her out, and he will smite *her power in the sea;* and she shall be devoured with fire."‖ "Who hath taken this counsel against Tyre, the crowning city, whose merchants are *princes*, whose traffickers are the *honourable* of the earth? The Lord of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth."** Well might the prophet say: "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?"††

A day is fast approaching, when it will be clearly seen, whether Christ or Mammon has swayed our

* Isa. xlviii. 10. ‡ Isa. ii. 6—19. ‡ Prov. xi. 4.
§ Eph. v. 5. ‖ Zech. ix. 3, 4. ** Isa. xxiii. 8, 9.
†† Isa. ii. 22.

affections. There are, perhaps, few sins which assume so plausible an appearance; and for which so many excuses are made as for that of covetousness. And hence it is that we have need to guard so much the citadel of the heart. Our blessed Lord, who knew what was in man, and who well knew the subtlety of this evil, has given us a double caution: "Take heed and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."* "For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?"† What advantage did Achan, Gehazi, Judas, and Ananias and Sapphira, gain by their desire of more? They reaped shame and death; and now stand as beacons in the word of God to warn us against their soul-destroying sin.‡

The simple possession of wealth is in itself no evil, because we read that this was promised to Israel as a *blessing:* "Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee *power to get wealth*, that he may establish his covenant, which he sware unto thy fathers."§ It is the *desire* of riches and the *passion* for them which is defiling and sinful. It is making an idol of money, by placing that confidence in it, which is due to God alone. "How hard is it for them that *trust in riches* to enter into the kingdom of God!‖" "The difference," observes the excellent Henry Venn, "between possessing wealth put into our hands by the providence of God, and *desiring to grow rich*, is as great as that between a worthless ambitious intruder into a place of honour, seeking nothing but his own base interest; and a man sought out for his worth, and invested with the same office for the public good. And those, who can see no material, no necessary distinction, in the two cases, are already blinded by the love of money."

* Luke xii. 15. † Luke ix. 25.
‡ See Josh. vii. 21.; 2 Kings v. 20, &c.; Matt. xxvi. 14—16., Mark xiv. 10, 11.; Acts v. 1, &c. § Deut. viii. 18.
‖ Matt. xix. 23.; Mark x. 23.; Luke xviii. 24.

There is, however, a holy spirit of desire for more, which we should cultivate continually. Lord give me an increasing desire for more faith and love, more obedience and activity in thy service; for more joy and peace, more humility and meekness; for more patience, and resignation to thy will. I would covet earnestly the best gifts, and above all, the graces of thy Holy Spirit. I cannot ask for these blessings too largely, nor expect them too confidently, if I only ask in reliance on the truth of thy promises. Thou hast said: "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."* "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."†

When praying for temporal blessings, may I ever do it with a cheerful acquiescence in Thy will, knowing my ignorance in asking. The very denial of my request may be the greatest mercy to my soul. But, O! thou Giver of all good, when I supplicate for spiritual graces, I may ask for showers of blessings; for the outpouring of thy Spirit in its richest measure, if I ask in faith, without wavering, pleading the merits of my Saviour.

How happy is the true believer, whose heart and hope are in heaven. His treasure is there; and when he leaves this earth, it is only to take possession of it, for God is his portion. For his guidance and support, while journeying heavenward, many sweet precepts and promises are given: "Take no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."‡ "Seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind."§ "Seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you."‖ "I would have you without carefulness."** "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving; let your request be made known unto

* Psa. lxxxi. 10. † Matt. xxi. 22.
‡ Matt. vi. 34. § Luke xii. 29. ‖ Ver. 31.
** 1 Cor. vii. 32.

God: and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."* While living in this Christian spirit, we shall experience the truth of Solomon's declaration: that God "hath made every thing beautiful in his time."† We shall avoid the folly of burdening to-day, with the cares of to-morrow; or of loading to-morrow, with the work of to-day. While we work for the meat which perisheth, according to the will of God: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground;"‡ we shall, above all, "labour for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give us."§ In this work and labour of love we cannot be too abundant. The most covetous heart may here find ample scope for all its desires. O! that I may ever feel this panting, this longing, this thirsting after God. Lord increase every holy, heavenly desire. While my hands are employed in the duties of my calling, may my heart be ever fixed upon thee. Take from me all covetous hankerings after earthly wealth. Give me a contented mind with the allotments of thy Providence. Be thou thy present and everlasting portion, and I shall be rich indeed!

As life advances to its close
The silent tomb appears in view;
Soon, where my aged sires repose,
Must I descend, and slumber too.

To dazzling wealth, or splendid name,
Each sparkling joy, the worldling joins,
Though in the midst of mirth and fame,
The soul, in secret languor pines.

That constant thirsting after more,
That torment of the carnal mind,
Creates of grief a plenteous store;
'T is all the covetous can find.

* Phil. iv. 6, 7. † Eccles. iii. 11. ‡ Gen. iii. 19. § John vi. 27.

What solid bliss can I obtain
From earth's most anxious toil and care?
I only forge a heavy chain,
To bind me fast in Satan's snare.

Yes! I have seen the poignant grief,
The torment cleaving close to sin,
Its fatal charms give no relief,
When gall o'erflows the heart within.

The thread of life is almost spun,
I hasten toward the eternal day;
Bless'd Saviour! ere my race is run,
Wash all my sins and guilt away.

O cleanse my soul from VANITY.

LXV.—ON THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.

"Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."—Luke ii. 10, 11.

WHAT angelic mind can descend into the depth, or soar to the height of redeeming love!

"Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh."* "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."† "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself."‡ "Jesus Christ was of the seed of David;"§ and yet, "is over all, God blessed for ever."‖

The two-fold nature of Christ was declared by himself on many occasions. To Nicodemus he said, "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven."** As Man, he was on earth; as God, he filled the heavens with his presence.

* 1 Tim. iii. 16. † John i. 14. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 19.
§ Rom. i. 3. ‖ Rom. ix. 5. ** John iii. 13.

Proud reason staggers at this truth, but faith rejoices and triumphs. Salvation is of the Lord.

"O for this love, let rocks and hills,
Their lasting silence break;
And all harmonious human tongues,
The Saviour's praises speak."

As Jesus was born in the flesh, so must I be born in the Spirit. He became the Son of man, that I might become a child of God. He died, that I might live. He ever liveth to make intercession for me, that where he is, there I may be also.

And did He indeed shed his precious blood for me? Was it for one so vile and wretched, that he became incarnate, endured a life of suffering, and a death of pain? And shall I not love him with all my powers? Why is my heart like adamant for hardness, and ice for coldness? O! what ingratitude, worse than satanic baseness! Come, thou Sun of Righteousness, dispel the clouds of unbelief which obscure thy brightness; drive away the mists of error; melt my frozen heart; subdue my stubborn will. Come with all thy vivifying rays of mercy, grace, and love; and make me humble, loving, teachable, and mild, an image of Thyself.

When the Saviour of the world was born, angels filled the canopy of heaven with joyful hallelujahs. They sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."* Did angels rejoice at man's salvation, and shall man, for whom this salvation was wrought, be silent and unmoved?

Alas! the loving Saviour "came unto his own, and his own received him not."† Do I condemn the Jews? "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her," said Jesus to the accusing Pharisees.‡ I would sit in judgment on myself.

Blessed Redeemer! thy word proclaims pardon and peace to a ruined world; thy ministers preach

* Luke ii. 14. † John i. 11. ‡ John viii. 7.

salvation, through thy atoning blood, to all who repent and believe: thy Spirit strives with sinners by powerful convictions: and still they withstand these workings of thy love. And had not thy grace been as omnipotent, as it is sovereign, I should even now have been in arms against thee. But O! the mighty, the almighty power of Love: thou didst graciously draw me to Thyself, and shed abroad in my heart the kindly influences of thy Spirit. Jesus, thou Friend of sinners, thou Physician of souls, how can I sufficiently adore and praise thee. As thou hadst compassion on the leper, the paralytic, the deaf, the dumb, the maimed, and the blind, so hast thou had pity on me. Yea, as thou didst raise Lazarus from the dead, so hast thou bid me LIVE. O! that I may live to thy glory while on earth; and live with thee in glory, when time shall be no more.

The anniversary of the birth of Christ, should be a season of rejoicing, not of carnal feasting; a season for spiritual delight, not to pamper the appetites, like heathens in their idol-temples; a season to exalt the soul by divine meditations, and to console it by the assurance of pardoning grace. O! that I may thus rejoice with holy joy, and feel every emotion alive to gratitude and praise. I want to feel my heart full of holy rapture, while I meditate upon the wonders of this day. But I must examine myself whether I be in the faith;—whether I have received Christ as offered to me in the gospel. Have I any *interest* in this redemption? Jesus is the Saviour of the world. He came to seek and to save that which is lost. I am lost; therefore he came to seek me. But will *all* be saved? Alas? no. And why? because "all men have not faith."* Here, then, is the all-important question—Do I believe in the Son of God with the heart unto righteousness? If I do believe, through grace, though by nature a child of wrath, I am among the saved in Christ Jesus; for "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-

* 2 Thess. iii. 2.

egotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should ot perish, but have everlasting life."*

O! what a declaration of grace is this! Truly is is the gospel of my salvation. "*Whosoever elieveth.*" Here is my warrant to hope. "Lord, I elieve; help thou mine unbelief."† Give me a ronger and a stronger faith, that it may grow into e assurance of hope. "*Whosoever believeth.*" O! hat a word of consolation. The word "*whosoever,*" its full meaning, as expressed by our divine Reeemer, extends to the utmost bounds of the human mily, whether in time or space. All, from Adam the last man born into the world, would be saved, *believers in Jesus;* for the word is, "*Whosoever.*" o nation, nor age, is exempted from this blessing, long as "*Whosoever believeth*" is recorded in the ord of Truth. No sins, however aggravated, shall revent the participation of this salvation, if there be ly *true faith* in the heart of the sinner, accomnied, as it ever will be, with sincere repentance, ve, and obedience; for Jesus hath said, that "Whoever," (let him be *what* he may; or *where* he may; have lived *when* he may;) "Whosoever believeth him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The same blessed truth was declared by our ord in his last commission to his Apostles: "Go ye to all the world, and preach the gospel to EVERY REATURE. He that *believeth*, and is baptised, shall e saved."‡

O what mercy and grace is this! Surely none eed now despair, who feel an earnest desire after lvation. Every thing connected with the redempon of mankind, bears the impress of the divine oodness. The Son of the Virgin was to be called JESUS: for he shall save his people from their ns."§ A mere man could not do this; therefore he , "Emmanuel; which being interpreted, is, God ith us."‖

* John iii. 16. † Mark ix. 24. ‡ Mark xvi. 15, 16.
§ Matt. i. 21. ‖ Matt. i. 23.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the city of David. How mysterious his character. He was the root and offspring of David. David's Son, and David's Lord.

These names are full of meaning. David signifies, beloved.

Jesus, when baptised by John in the river Jordan, was declared by a voice from heaven, to be the beloved of the Father: "This is my *beloved* Son, in whom I am well pleased."* And St. Paul exhorts the Colossians to give thanks unto the Father, who "hath translated us into the kingdom of his *dear* Son."†

Bethlehem, the birth-place of Christ, is a name of rich import. Bethlehem signifies the house of bread. How suitable is this for him who declared: "I am the bread of life." "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."‡

O! that my soul may be nourished and sustained by this "true bread from heaven." Lord, evermore give me this bread. Do thou dwell in me, and I in thee. May I daily feed upon thee, by faith, in my heart with thanksgiving.

Bethlehem signifies also the house of war. How remarkable this. Jesus, when lying in the manger, was announced to the shepherds, as "Christ the Lord,"§ the Anointed One, Messiah, the Prince. To Mary, before her conception, the angel said: "Thou shalt bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."‖

To Adam, in Paradise, the promise was given, that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's

* Matt. iii. 17.; Mark i. 11.; Luke iii. 22. † Col i. 13.
‡ John vi. 35, 51. § Luke ii. 11. ‖ Luke i. 31—33.

ead.* This implies conflict and conquest. Christ ras foretold by Isaiah as a mighty conqueror: "Who s this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments rom Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, tra- elling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak n righteousness, mighty to save."†

David, in the spirit of prophecy, beautifully escribes the glory and majesty of Christ. "He hall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the iver unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in he wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies hall lick the dust."‡

Jesus, by his Spirit in David, thus speaks of imself: "The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my on; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and he uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt ash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."§

St. Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews declares, that through death, Christ destroyed him that had he power of death, that is, the devil."‖ Thus fulfil- ng the first prediction: Satan bruised the heel of the romised seed, when Jesus suffered on the cross; and Christ, by his death, bruised the head, the kingdom f the power of darkness. "For this purpose the on of God was manifested, that he might destroy he works of the devil."** Believers, then, must ndure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, nowing that the Captain of their salvation was made erfect through suffering.†† Spiritual armour is pro- ided for the Christian warrior, the girdle of truth, he breast-plate of righteousness, the shield of faith, he helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit, which the word of God.‡‡ The command is given: Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like ien, be strong."§§

* Gen. iii. 15. † Isa. lxiii. 1. ‡ Psa. lxxii. 8, 9.
§ Psa. ii. 7—9. ‖ Heb. ii. 14. ** 1 John iii. 8.
†† Heb. ii. 10. ‡‡ Eph. vi. 13—17. §§ 1 Cor. xvi. 13.

The view of the conquering Saviour is vouchsafed, to animate his soldiers to the fight. St. John, in prophetic vision, saw Jesus going forth "conquering, and to conquer."* "He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.....Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."† "The armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean."‡ Well might Moses sing: "The Lord is a man of war: Jehovah is his name."§

I would now remember my baptismal engagement. It was no idle, no unmeaning ceremony, when the minister held me in his arms, a helpless infant, and in the presence of God, uttered these solemn words: "We receive this child into the congregation of Christ's flock, and do sign him with the sign of the cross, in token that hereafter he shall not be *ashamed* to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and *manfully to fight* under his banner against sin, the world, and the devil; and to continue Christ's *faithful soldier* and *servant* unto his life's end. Amen."

Let me thus live; let me not be ashamed of Christ; let me fight manfully under his banners; let me continue his faithful soldier and servant; and what will be the consequence? By multitudes of baptised Christians, I shall be derided as an enthusiast; I shall be shunned, as a fanatic! And yet, these scoffers and deriders are to be considered as *regenerated* persons!

St. Paul, with fearless heart, through the power and grace of Christ, led his converts on, to conflict and to victory. To the Corinthians he declared: "We do not war after the flesh: (for the weapons of

* Rev. vi. 2. † Rev. xix. 13—15. ‡ Rev. xix. 14.
§ Exod. xv. 3.

our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."*

To Timothy, St. Paul writes: "Endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."†

And when he came to lay down his life for Christ, and to receive the crown of martyrdom; he could triumphantly say: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."‡

If, like the blessed Apostle, I am drawing all my supplies out of the fulness which is in Christ Jesus; and if, like him, I keep the faith, enduring unto the end, with him also I shall receive the crown of life which fadeth not away.

When I think of Bethlehem, I will think of the House of bread, and of the House of war; out of which He came, whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting; even Jesus, who is the Ruler in Israel, the Light of the Gentiles, and for salvation to the ends of the earth.§

Behold! through the regions of death,
What light and what gladness arise;
Jehovah, in manhood array'd,
Descends from his throne in the skies.

Rejoice, O ye sinners, rejoice!
Exult at the life-giving view;

* 2 Cor. x. 3—5. † 2 Tim. ii. 3, 4. ‡ 2 Tim. iv. 6—8.
§ Micah v. 2.; Isa. xlix. 6.; Luke ii. 32.; Acts xiii. 47.

Adore the rich grace of the Cross,
Where the Saviour expir'd for you.

Now peace is proclaimed on high,
O! touch the bless'd sceptre and live;
Ask freely whatever you want,
For God now delighteth to give.

The blood of your Saviour and Lord,
Has purchas'd each blessing above;
The mansions of glory and rest;
The Father's approval and love.

The Spirit of grace shall descend,
And kindle the rapturous fire,
Whose flame will increase and expand,
When life's feeble lamp shall expire.

In yonder bright region of bliss,
Your praise will incessantly flow;
Then sing to his glory and grace,
Whilst strangers and pilgrims below.

LXVI.—A SABBATH MEDITATION.

"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day."—Rev. i. 10.

"How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!"—Psa. lxxxiv. 1.

I BLESS thee, O! Lord, for the return of this holy day. When retired from the world and all its vanities, I can contemplate the glorious truths of thy gospel, and listen to that still small voice, which is seldom heard amid the pleasures, companies, and cares of a world which lieth in wickedness.

Often have I thought upon the evil of sin, both in its nature and effects; but give me, in mercy, a deeper view, and a greater abhorrence of it. Destroy its reigning power in my heart. Enable me to resist its rebellions, to subdue its lustings, till death shall

end the warfare, and conduct me to the realms of peace.

I learn the malignity of sin at the cross of Christ. Was Jesus the beloved of the Father?* Was he "daily his delight, rejoicing always before him?"† Was he the eternal Son of God, "one with the Father?"‡ He was; and yet, if he will undertake for sinners, he must stand in their place; if he will become their surety, he must smart for it.§ All their sins must meet upon him. He must bear the punishment due unto them. Though the delight and joy of the Father, yet, if he will become their bondsman, divine justice cannot release him, till he has paid the uttermost farthing. How terrible to the sinner is the righteousness of Jehovah. O! my soul, what must become of thee, if thou art not in Christ; if all this wrath must fall on thee? The forgiveness of the least sin, (esteemed least by men,) can only be procured by the blood of God incarnate! "Without shedding of blood is no remission."‖ "We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."**

From this day forth, may I have grace never to trifle with sin; never to cherish any sin under the false notion that it is a *little one*. To have the smallest transgression forgiven, Christ must die! The blood of Jesus Christ, and nothing else, cleanseth from all sin.†† How then can I escape, if I neglect so great salvation?‡‡ "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me,"§§ though I make many formal prayers, practise many austerities, and go through a round of ceremonies. I may do many things, and apply to many physicians, but all will prove unavailing, if I neglect to go *in faith* to the Cross of Christ.

Give me grace, O God, to guard against *positive*

* See Matt. iii. 17.; Mark i. 11.; Luke iii. 22.
† Prov. viii. 30. ‡ See John x. 30., xvii. 11, 22. § Prov. xi. 15.
‖ Heb. ix. 22. ** Col. i. 14. †† 1 John i. 7.
‡‡ Heb. ii. 3. §§ Psa. lxvi. 18.

evil; yea, to abstain, even from the *appearance* of it; to watch against and suppress the *first motions* of sin in the heart; and to avoid every thing that might prove an inlet to it, or have a tendency towards it.

Give me grace never to do that, of which the *lawfulness* is dubious; for "whatsoever is not of faith is sin."* May I not only ascertain the lawfulness of an action but also its *expediency*, lest, by not attending to this Apostolic rule, I should become an occasion of sin to others, by emboldening them to do that which, though lawful to me, is contrary to the conscience of a weaker brother.† "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient,"‡ was the judgment of St. Paul.

Give me grace to be circumspect in all my ways; to walk in wisdom towards them that are without; to redeem the time, because the days are evil.

This day I have been in the house of God; the place where his honour dwelleth. I have joined with the congregation in praising God, and in hearing the glad tidings of salvation. But, O! my soul, how have these services been performed? What sincerity has there been in thy prayers; what fervency in thy praises; what faith in listening to the words of eternal life?

Lord! I am ashamed when I reflect on the wretched offering I have this day presented unto thee; an offering so mean, so full of blemishes, so unworthy the acceptance of the Majesty of heaven. "If ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor: will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts."§ Alas! how often do I fall under this condemnation. Yet, O! all-gracious Father, accept my sacrifice of prayer and praise, defective as it is, through the all-perfect sacrifice of thy beloved Son, who died upon the cross for me. I offer myself and

* Rom. xiv. 23. † Rom. xiv. 13—17.; I Cor. x. 27—33.
‡ 1 Cor. vi. 12. § Mal. i. 8.

all I am, upon the altar of his cross, that I may henceforth be a living sacrifice, devoted unto thee, body, soul, and spirit, which is my reasonable service. May all my hopes of pardon rest on the atonement of thy dear Son; all my peace be drawn from his obedience unto death, all my joy spring from the assurance that he ever liveth to make intercession for me.

The more I know of myself, the more I find cause for deeper humiliation. The more I know of my duty to thee, the more I am convinced that I am an unprofitable servant. The more I know of thy Majesty, Glory, Greatness, Holiness, and Justice, the more I am persuaded that no flesh living can be justified in thy presence. The more I reflect upon my holiest services, the more I discover of their imperfection and sinfulness.

Blessed Jesus! how lovely, how endearing dost thou appear, as the Lord my Righteousness. O! clothe me in this garment of salvation; that, being accepted in thee, I may experience thy Father's love; the Holy Spirit's consolation, and stand with "boldness in the day of judgment."* Seal this blessing to my heart, through thy sanctifying grace; then shall I have the witness in myself, that I am born from above.

Whilst I remain in this earthly tabernacle, O! Almighty Saviour, spiritualise my affections. Give me a heart to love thee, to delight itself in thee. Take away all relish for earthly, sinful pleasures. Sanctify all my enjoyments of creature comforts, by never forgetting *thee* in them, nor losing the sight of *thy glory* in the use of them. Let all my faculties and powers be consecrated unto thee who made them. And let me praise thee, blessed Lord, while life and being last.

It is comparatively easy to live in the form of godliness. To attend the service of the sanctuary, to pray in private and in the family, to read the Scriptures, to associate with religious characters, to

* 1 John iv. 17.

talk about religion, and to give alms to the poor, are duties which may be performed, though the heart be not right with God. These things must be done to maintain the Christian character, as is evident from the word of God. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is."* "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet†." "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."‡ "Search the Scriptures."§ "I am a companion of all them that fear thee."‖ "Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."** "Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in the land."†† But experience affords abundant proof, that all this may be done from a principle of self-righteousness; from a principle of vainglory; from a desire to be seen of men, and to obtain a name.

To ascertain my real character, I must look into *the heart*. Do I labour to perform these outward duties with a single eye to the favour and glory of God? Am I more anxious about UNSEEN duties, remembering the words of Hagar: "Thou God seest me."‡‡ The flame of vainglory, which is kindled by the pride of fallen nature, is fanned and increased by the suggestions of Satan, and kept alive by the praises of men. O! how difficult it is, to keep down this unhallowed fire. Even when we think it is quenched, it is still smothering beneath the embers, ready to burst forth at the least blast of Satan's temptations.

Let me, then, look *within*. Do I strive to keep my heart with all diligence, from every impure thought; from every idle imagination; from all irregular passions and desires; from all evil affections and lusts?

* Heb. x. 25. † Matt. vi. 6.
‡ Matt. xviii. 20. § John v. 39. ‖ Psa. cxix. 63.
** Col. iv. 6. †† Deut. xv. 11. ‡‡ Gen. xvi. 13.

Do I study to maintain a conscience void of offence towards God, as well as man? Am I continually watching over the motions of the mind, the rapid flights of fancy, that the enemy may not rush into my heart by some unguarded avenue; or find me sleeping at my post?

Conscious of my utter inability to help myself, am I daily, yea, constantly, looking unto Jesus for grace and strength, to mortify the flesh, and to cherish the influences of the Spirit?

If, while diligently performing the *outward* duties of the gospel, I am unwearied in cultivating *inward* sanctity, then, I possess an evidence of being renewed in the spirit of my mind, and may draw nigh to God, through Christ, with filial confidence. But, if my religion be confined to forms and ceremonies, *coldly performed*, from education or custom, I am a self-deceiver; and should I knock at the *closed door*, saying, Lord, open unto me; the answer would be, as to the foolish virgins, "I know you not."*

O! thou Shepherd of thy chosen flock, grant that the outward call of thy word may be accompanied by the inward call of thy Spirit. Then shall I be stirred up to call earnestly upon thee, to seek thee in all the means of grace, to pant after thee, as the hart panteth for the water brooks. Then will my interest in thee be unclouded; my peace, through faith in thy righteousness, be secured; for all thy redeemed ones are the purchase of thy blood, given to thee by the Father; chosen in thee before the foundation of the world; called in time, and preserved unto eternal glory. None of the tribulations of this evil world can separate their love from thee, and no created power can separate thy love from them.

O! blessed bond of union, cemented by thy blood; their salvation is sure; their names are written in heaven; they are engraven on thy heart; they are thine, and none shall pluck them out of thy hands.

* Matt. xxv. 11, 12.

Such is the blessedness, the security of the sheep of thy pasture. Thou hast said, "I know my sheep, and am known of mine;" they "hear my voice," and "follow me;" and "I give unto them eternal life."*

Art thou Wisdom? They are taught of thee, and made wise unto salvation. They are guided into all truth.

Art thou Power? They are strengthened with might by thy Spirit in the inner man; and made more than conquerors over sin and Satan.

Art thou Goodness? They daily partake of its blessings; inviting others to taste and see how gracious the Lord is.

Art thou Faithfulness and Truth? This is the Rock on which they build; and, being grounded and settled in thy Truth, can triumph over all their foes. "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, Lord, hast not *forsaken* them that seek thee."†

Art thou Righteousness? This is their glorious dress, in which arrayed, they can appear before the throne, with holy boldness, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Art thou Holiness? By this, they are made like unto Thee, being sanctified in body, soul, and spirit. They bear thy image in righteousness and true holiness. They are beautified with thy salvation; and made "a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

Art thou Mercy? This is their rejoicing and song of praise. Thy grace is the theme of their thanksgiving. "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy."‡ "Let them now that fear the Lord say, that his mercy endureth for ever."§

* John x. 14, 27, 28. † Psa. ix. 10. ‡ Micah vii. 18.
§ Psa. cxviii. 4.

Art thou Love? Oh! how great is thy people's joy. They love thee, because thou hast first loved them.* They love thee, because with loving-kindness thou hast drawn them.† They love thee, because thou hast shed abroad thy love in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto them.‡ Their language is, "By grace are we saved. By grace we are what we are. To grace be all the praise."

Art thou a Prophet, Priest, and King; a Redeemer, Advocate, and Intercessor? In all these offices and characters they admire and love thee. Thou art the Lord their God; their Portion; their All in All.

Dost thou feel, O my soul, this love to the Saviour; this faith and hope? Is he precious to thee, the chief of ten thousand, the altogether lovely? Is he thy beloved and thy friend? Then rejoice; this cometh of the Lord; this flows from the fountain of his Sovereign love. Rejoice, and look across this narrow span of time, to the boundless regions of eternity. There, in the world of glory, shall all the chosen flock, redeemed by his blood, surround the throne of Jesus, and swell with countless myriads, the chorus of his praise.

O! while life shall last, admire this free, this rich, this undeserved mercy. Lie low before him in humility. Rise high in gratitude. Never cease to love, till the pure flame shall reach the source from whence it came. There it will burn with inextinguishable blaze, to the glory of the Triune Jehovah.

Sweet is the day of holy rest,
  To souls renew'd by love divine;
They lean as on the Saviour's breast;
  Like Moses, on the Mount, they shine.

The Saviour's mild reflected grace,
  Gives witness to their peace within;
While they, with arms of faith, embrace,
  The Great Atonement made for sin.

* 1 John iv. 19. † Jer. xxxi. 3. ‡ Rom. v. 5.

With joy, they hear the Gospel sound,
With pure devotion, join in prayer;
They praise the Saviour they have found,
And all his mercies richly share.

The sacred Sabbath of their Lord,
They love the best of all the seven;
With saints unite in one accord,
And antedate the bliss of heaven.

O that with them, I thus may love
The consecrated House of Prayer;
Then fly to purer realms above,
And praise my Saviour ever there.

LXVII.—CHRIST'S INTERCESSORY PRAYER.

"I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever."—John xiv. 16.

THE last discourses which our Saviour held with his disciples, closing them with his intercessory prayer, have been, and ever will be, a source of the richest consolation to his Church. While we read them in *a spirit of love* towards him who uttered them, our language will be that of the two disciples walking to Emmaus: "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way."*

Those are, indeed, to be pitied, who can peruse, unmoved, those gracious words which proceeded out of his lips. Truly he spake, as never man spake. His words are spirit, and they are life.†

How many Christians, baptised in the name of Christ, and professing themselves to be members of his visible Church, would rather read an exciting novel, or some highly-wrought work of fiction, than these *words of eternal life*. How true are the parables of our Lord, which describe those mixed charac-

* Luke xxiv. 32. † John vii. 46.; vi. 63.

ters, which abound in the so-called religious world. Surely it must be the duty of faithful ministers to point out the distinction, and to guard their hearers against self-delusion. But is it always so?

The beautiful Intercessory Prayer of our Redeemer, as recorded in the seventeenth chapter of St. John's gospel, is full of the riches of the Covenant of Grace, and sets forth, in the most lively manner, the character and privileges of his people.

We learn from the supplications of our Lord to the Eternal Father, that all true believers are the gift of the Father to the Son.

"Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast *given him*."—Ver. 2.

"I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou *gavest me* out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me."—Ver. 6.

"I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast *given me*; for they are thine."—Ver. 9.

"Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast *given me*, that they may be one, as we are."—Ver. 11.

"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast *given me*, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory."—Ver. 24.

These gracious petitions, which embrace all true believers, (see vers. 20, 21.) evidently declare that in the Covenant of Grace, entered into between the three Divine Persons in the Godhead, Jesus Christ had a people given to him, before the foundation of the world, which he should redeem unto himself in time, and glorify to all eternity. For this reason, the angel said, "His name shall be called Jesus: for he shall save *his people* from their sins."* And to complete this act of mercy, Christ declared, "Where I am, there shall also my servant be."†

In unison with these supplicatory addresses of our Lord, he declared in the synagogue at Caper-

* Matt. i. 21. † John xii. 26.

naum, "All that the Father *giveth me* shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." "This is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath *given me I should lose nothing*, but should raise it up again at the last day." "No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him." "No man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father." "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."*

The natural heart is now, as it was when these blessed words were spoken. We read, "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him."† They could not receive the doctrine of Christ; they were offended at him; they knew not the spiritual nature of true faith which can feed upon Christ as the nourishment of the soul. And in this our day, the more spiritual, the more experimental, any statement of Gospel Truth is, and the more it will be opposed by some who call themselves, "Masters in Israel;" and be derided by others, who pride themselves as being members of the Catholic Church. The heart, if unrenewed, is the same under every outward guise. The Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Herodians, all opposed the Holy Saviour.

Jesus, by his word, speaks to us as he did to the Apostles: "Will ye also go away?" O! that the constant language of our hearts may be, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."‡

How anxiously should we guard against declension, remembering the words of our Lord to the presiding minister of the Ephesian Church: "I have

* John vi. 37, 39, 44, 65, 45. † John vi. 66.
‡ John vi. 67—69.

somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy *first love.*"*

The humble believer sees a fund of blessedness in these petitions of his Lord; and, while standing, by faith, on this immoveable Rock, he can say with joyful heart: "He hath set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God."†

In this Intercessory Prayer, we learn much of the character of Christ, as the Great Head of his Church.

"Father,.....glorify *thy Son*, that thy Son also may glorify thee."—Ver. 1.

"I have finished *the work* which thou gavest me to do."—Ver. 4.

"I have given unto them *the words* which thou gavest me."—Ver. 8.

"They have known surely that *I came out from thee*, and they have believed that thou didst send me."—Ver. 8.

"As thou hast *sent me* into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world."—Ver. 18.

"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art in me*, and *I in thee*."—Ver. 21.

"*The glory which thou gavest me* I have given them; that they may be one, even as *we are one*."—Ver. 22.

"That they may behold *my glory*, which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me *before the foundation of the world*."—Ver. 24.

"Glorify thou me with thine own self, with *the glory which I had with thee before the world was*."—Ver. 5.

Jesus declared himself to be the Son of the Eternal Father.—(Ver. 1.) One with the Father.—(Ver. 22.) Glorious in himself before the foundation of the world.—(Ver. 5.) The Prophet of his Church.—(Ver. 8.) The Saviour of sinners.—(Ver. 4.)

* Rev. ii. 4. † Psa. xl. 2, 3.

O! that I may ever receive the adorable Jesus, as God manifest in the flesh. With such plain declarations from the lips of Christ himself, how fearful it is that any should dare to deny his divinity. The fallen spirits did not commit this sin, for they confessed his Godhead: "What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God?"* The Saviour wanted not the testimony of Satan, therefore he "suffered not the devils to speak, because *they knew him.*"† But to the deniers of his divinity, among men, mercy is offered, if they will turn unto him by faith and repentance. O! how gracious are the words of our compassionate Redeemer. "Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him."‡ Saul, of Tarsus, drew his own character, and the Saviour's grace. "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a *blasphemer*, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief."§ The sin of Saul was, therefore, not the sin against the Holy Ghost, or he would never have been forgiven.‖ "He did it *ignorantly* in unbelief."

In his Intercessory Prayer, Jesus points out the character of his redeemed people.

"They have *known* that all things whatsoever thou hast given me, are of thee."—Ver. 7.

"They are *not of the world*, even as I am not of the world."—Ver. 14.

"*Sanctify* them through thy truth: thy word is truth."—Ver. 17.

"I sanctify myself, that they also might be *sanctified through* the truth."—Ver. 19.

"That they all *may be one;*.....that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."—Ver. 21.

"That they may be made *perfect in one.*"—Ver. 23.

* Matt. viii. 29. † Mark i. 34. ‡ Matt. xii. 32.
§ 1 Tim. i. 12, 13. ‖ Matt. xii. 31.

Thus wrote St. John to the believing members of the Christian Church: "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye *know all* things." "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin." "If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."*

How different is all this from nominal Christianity; from that religion of the world, which consists in the form of godliness without the power.—Such religion, if, indeed, such it can be called, will never cheer the soul in a day of distress, nor support it in the hour of death. In this land of Bibles and Churches, persons are almost constrained to show some deference to religion. The man of the world goes to church *once* on the Sabbath; and, to keep up appearances, will, perhaps, attend at the Lord's table, *once* in the year. But his heart is not there. From the church he will stroll into the news-room, as if he could not too speedily obliterate the faint impression which the preacher may have made. The afternoon is passed away at his table, or on his horse; and his tedious evening is shortened by retiring earlier than usual to rest. His language is that of the Jews of old: "When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? *and the sabbath*, that we may set forth wheat?"†

To such ungrateful members of the visible Church, how affecting is the language of the Almighty: "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel.'‡ "O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee?"§ "Ye have wearied the Lord."‖

In this Intercessory Prayer, the privileges of the true believer are interwoven with the petitions.

"All mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them."—Ver. 10.

* 1 John ii. 20.; v. 4.; iii. 9.; iv. 11.
† Amos viii. 5. ‡ Jer. ii. 31. § Micah vi. 3.
‖ Mal. ii. 17.

"While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept; and none of them is lost."—Ver. 12.

"I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."—Ver. 15.

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word."—Ver. 20.

"Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me."—Ver. 23.

"I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them."—Ver. 26.

No language can convey to the *spiritual* mind greater blessings than these. O! for faith to receive, with child-like simplicity, these gracious truths, which dropped from the lips of incarnate Love.

As the blind are unaffected by the sublimest prospects, and the deaf by the sweetest sounds, so do these displays of sovereign grace, these accents of redeeming mercy, produce no saving benefit on the carnal mind. Unbelief and pride, sensuality and the love of the world, hypocrisy and formality, like so many bars, close the citadel of the heart. Nothing can dislodge the strong man armed, but the mighty power of God. No human efforts will avail. Who can stop the whirlwind with a feather,—or the rolling tide with a straw? So helpless is man, when he attempts in his own strength, to stem the torrent of his corruptions. He, who said, "Let there be light: and there was light:"* He, who said to the wind and waves, "Peace, be still:"† He, who said to Lazarus, "Come forth!"‡ and the dead arose; can alone subdue the heart, and make the sinner willing in the day of his power.

It is delightful to dwell upon this comprehensive Prayer of our blessed Saviour. Here I am taught, that all who are the subjects of grace, are the gift of

* Gen. i. 3. † Mark iv. 39. ‡ John xi. 43.

the Father to the Son: that to such, the Son gives eternal life: that the beginning of this eternal life is to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent: that this knowledge is imparted by Jesus Christ through the teaching of the Spirit of Truth, the Comforter: that this knowledge is of a sanctifying nature: that it leads to a separation from the world, and to a union to each other: that these happy souls are loved by the Father and the Son: are kept from the evil that is in the world: and preserved unto eternal glory.

O! blessed Lord, Thou who hast cast thy bright beams of light upon thy Church, how does my heart pant after this blessedness. I cannot claim it; for through sin, I have forfeited every favour; but, let me never cease to crave it, since thou hast interceded, not only for thine Apostles, but for all them who shall believe on thee through their word. As a poor suppliant at the door of mercy, I wait in humble expectation of the promised grace. Lord, enable me to believe in thee, through the words of thy Apostles; then I shall experience all the riches of thy love, contained in this precious prayer, which, as the Intercessor of thy people, thou didst present to the Eternal Father.

LXVIII.—REFLECTIONS ON THE COMMENCEMENT OF A NEW YEAR.

"Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called it Eben-ezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."—1 Sam. vii. 12.

ANOTHER year has fled! But how has it fled? Bearing the sins of unnumbered multitudes, which shall all be exposed at the judgment day! When first it opened upon me, it was greeted with thankfulness. A monument of gratitude was erected, on

which was inscribed, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped me." But, it has been an eventful year to many. Numbers, who beheld the opening year, full of hope, and prospects of happiness, are now in the silent grave.

> "He builds too low,
> Who builds beneath the skies."

I am preserved in life, while death hath cut down many a lovely flower; and why is this? Why am I now on mercy's ground, within the precincts of salvation, while many are imprisoned, where hope can never come? It is because my gracious Lord hath interceded for me. "Cut it not down. Let it alone this year also."* His thoughts towards me, are thoughts of peace and not of evil. In richest grace, he bears with my rebellious heart; he deigns to wash me in his blood; to cover me with his merits; to purify my heart; to make me a trophy of his love. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy,"† is the language of a Sovereign. "I will," is the voice of the Omnipotent Jehovah. How sweet is the sound, when coming through the Covenant of Grace: "I *will* put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds *will* I write them. And their sins and iniquities *will* I remember no more."‡ "I *will* give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord; and they *shall* be my people, and I *will* be their God: for they *shall* return unto me with their whole heart."§ Precious indeed are those *words of power*, uttered by Sovereign Love. Truly it is by grace that we are saved. God works in us both *to will* and to do of his good pleasure.‖ He inclines our hearts to himself, so that when the call is given, "Come ye to the waters;"** "whosoever *will*, let him take the water of life freely;"†† the power goes forth with the command, and the sinner, by grace, is saved.

* See Luke xiii. 6, 9. † Rom. ix. 15.
‡ Heb. x. 16, 17. § Jer. xxiv. 7. ‖ Eph. ii. 5, 8.; Phil. ii. 13.
** Isa. lv. 1. †† Rev. xxii. 17.

While I meditate on the days that are past, two principles operate in my heart:—*Hatred of myself*, for having so long and so grievously offended the best of Beings; for having so much delighted in sin, and so little in things divine:—*Love to God*, for such unbounded mercy, such amazing forbearance, such striving and inviting, such compassion and pity, shown to the chief of sinners—an heir of hell!

O! my soul, humble thyself in the dust before the Majesty of heaven. Think how many precious moments, hours, days, and years, have borne on their wings ten thousand times ten thousand sins, which thou hast committed, and which are obliterated from the tablet of thy memory. But, oh! remember, God has not forgotten them. He will bring into judgment every *secret* thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.* Canst thou think of this, O my soul, and not tremble? Canst thou think of this, and not fly with eager steps to the Cross of Christ, that, through faith in his atoning blood, all thy guilty stains may be blotted out, and thy sins and iniquities be remembered no more?

Lord! behold me prostrate at thy feet. I come to thy mercy-seat; to the Lamb which was slain, who alone can redeem me by his blood. Look upon the bleeding sacrifice, and then thy look on me will be a look of pardoning love. Yes! blessed Lord, thou never hast, nor ever wilt reject the vilest sinner, who clings to the Cross of Christ, and there, besprinkled with the falling drops of his atoning blood, cries out for mercy. Look on me, O thou God of my salvation. Behold a sinner vile and wretched, pleading before thy throne the merits of thy Son. For his only sake, O Lord, pardon all that is past; for his only sake accept me graciously; for his sake love me freely; and mercifully vouchsafe a rich effusion of thy Holy Spirit, that this opening year may be spent in thy service, and to the promotion of thy glory. May all my powers be devoted to thee, every affection and

* Eccles. xii. 14.

desire be fixed upon thee. Make me *sincere* in all I pray for. Give me a *single eye* in all I do. May every word spoken for thee, be the undissembled expression of my heart. Thou knowest what I am. Lord, teach me to know myself. Give me daily the victory over all my inward corruptions and spiritual enemies. Grant unto thy servant every internal and eternal blessing; and not to me only, but to all who are united to me by the bonds of friendship, or the ties of blood.

Another year has elapsed. New mercies call for fresh praise. I long to be a *Christian indeed*. Mere profession will profit nothing. It yields no comfort. It brings no glory to God. It differs as much from vital godliness as the portrait does from the living subject. It is the appearance, not the reality of religion.

Nothing can make me happy, but a real, vital union to Christ by faith. Nothing can procure my acceptance with God, but his righteousness. The great Apostle Paul desired nothing so much as to win Christ, and be found in him; not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.* This is what I want, and for which I pray. Let differing Christians understand the blessed truth in whatever light they may, yet, of this I am persuaded, that no sinner has, by nature, any righteousness of his own. To assert this would be a solecism, a contradiction in terms. How strange to talk of a sinner's righteousness! of a sinner's holiness! We might as well speak about the loyalty of a traitor, or of the sobriety of a confirmed drunkard. The most devoted children of God have cause to exclaim, "Behold, I am vile:"† how much more those, who have never experienced regenerating grace.

An unconverted sinner is always proud. He is ever ready to place his honourable dealing, benevo-

* Phil. iii. 8, 9. † Job xl. 4.

lence, and urbanity, against his glaring violations of God's commandments, and then to flatter himself, that the balance will be in his favour; or, at least, that God will be too merciful to execute his threatenings upon him. He charges with uncharitableness, the faithful dealings of the righteous, who boldly tell him, that "the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."* He will not believe that the God of Truth will be true to his word. He dares the result, and dies to learn in hell, what he willingly remained ignorant of while on earth. But how different are the views and feelings of the awakened sinner. He sees the precipice on which he is standing, and trembles to behold the yawning gulf below.

He stands amazed at his former blindness; sees his utter inability to escape from the ground which he feels to be sinking beneath him; cries aloud for help, saying, "Lord, help me," embraces with anxious solicitude the gracious hand which is stretched out to preserve him; and acknowledges the infinite goodness of that God, whose free love thus snatches him from destruction.

Am I this ransomed sinner? Have I been saved through the beloved of the Father, from the curse of the law, and the damnation of hell?† Have I experienced the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit? Do I feel the grateful emotions of a new heart? a sincere devotedness to the Author of all my mercies? Happy, thrice happy shall I be, if I possess this *inward witness* that I am a child of God. Then will the opening year, be a year of blessedness. Trials may come, but they will all be sanctified. Death may come, but it will only bear me into the presence of my Saviour.

What abundant cause I have to bless and praise my heavenly Father for all the grace, mercy, and peace which he has bestowed on me through Jesus Christ my Lord. It is like a flowing stream, whose

* Psa. ix. 17. † Matt. xxiii. 33.

pure waters refresh and gladden the soul. God is love.

O! that my heart could enlarge itself in some humble proportion to the blessings which it receives. May every affection, desire, and purpose have *gratitude* written upon them; and every action of my life be the fruit of holy love, of unfeigned faith in the Lord Jesus.

In the midst of the divine mercies, I have to mourn over an evil heart, ever ready to start aside like a broken bow, and too prone to cleave unto the dust. O! how hateful is sin. It is the disease of the soul. It is the poison which kills my joys and comforts. When it works within, O what languor it produces, what deadness of feeling! Sometimes it racks the conscience, and then nothing but war reigns in the soul. A wild confusion, a stormy night!

How precious, at such a season, is a believing view of the Cross of Christ. How gracious the voice, "Look unto me, and be ye saved."* The stormy wind is then hushed; the swelling waves subside; a sweet calm ensues, and peace once more resumes its empire in the soul. Every tempest-tossed, afflicted believer, can bear witness to the all-subduing, the all-consoling voice of the Son of God, when he says to the inward storm: "Peace, be still."

How great is the goodness of the Lord. His tender mercies are over all his works. Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life. What shall I render unto the Lord for all the benefits which he hath done unto me? I can render nothing unto the Lord, but what I *first* receive from him. And what can I render, but praise and thanksgiving? How can I better show my thankfulness, than by receiving the cup of salvation, the glorious and gracious offers of redemption through the blood of his beloved Son. But this also comes from God. It is the fruit of his everlasting love. It is the work of his almighty power. All good comes from Him.

* Isa. xlv. 22.

I can render nothing unto God that is pleasing in his sight, but what he first bestows, according to the riches of his grace.

O! that I could feel my heart deeply and abidingly impressed with a sense of his goodness. I deserve nothing but wrath; yet God speaks in mercy. "Fear thou not; for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."*

When I look upon the year which is past, I have cause to lament my unfaithfulness, and unfruitfulness. The review should indeed fill me with humiliation. I find so much of earth, and so little of heaven; so much of the old man, and so little of the new; that I may well doubt whether any saving work has been begun in my soul. My feelings and sentiments about religion may be the effect of the society with which I am connected, and of the ministry under which I am placed; rather than the work of grace, before whose potent rays the darkness of error flies as the evening mist before the rising sun. I may be evangelically right in my views, and yet practically wrong in my heart and life. Knowledge and holiness are not always connected. There is a knowledge which puffeth up, but charity edifieth.† The wisdom that is from above is pure.‡

In prosecuting my enquiry, I find much comfort from the Apostle's own experience in the seventh chapter to the Romans; and from his declaration to the Galatians;§ that "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh:" that "these are contrary the one to the other; so that we cannot do the things that we *would*." Hence, there is a conflict in the heart of the believer, which is peculiar to himself, and which is unknown, because *unfelt* by the unregenerate. There is, indeed, in unconverted characters, a struggle at times, between natural con-

* Isa. xli. 10. † 1 Cor. viii. 1. ‡ James iii. 17.
§ Gal. v. 17.

science, and their wicked desires and practices. But, as their conscience is darkened and defiled, through original corruption, so it is always insufficient to break through those sins which are constantly weakening its force by repetition, till it become, not only without feeling, but a justifier of those actions which once it condemned. Hence arises those excuses for sin, and those self-justifications, after a course of transgression, which would not have been made at the first outset into the paths of wickedness. David has strikingly described the progress of the wicked, by walking, standing, sitting.* He who walks after evil counsel, will soon stand in the way of evil men, and finally sit down in the seat of the scornful.

This inward fighting, between natural conscience and wicked desires, is vastly different from the struggle between nature and grace. In this struggle, the flesh indeed rebels, but grace reigns. They both lust, as the Apostle expresseth it, but grace obtains the ascendancy. The will of the believer is decidedly for God, although the animal passions may struggle for indulgence. The affections are too often, alas! allured from better to meaner objects, but the new principle checks the aberration, and preserves the heart from a total departure from God. Thus believers "are kept by the power of God through faith," that new implanted principle, "unto salvation."† For the same gracious purpose, the Almighty says: "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me;"‡ which fear is another holy principle tending to keep the believer in the way of life and salvation. This faith and fear, combined with holy love shed abroad in the heart, through the power of the Holy Ghost, forms that spiritual life, which is imparted and maintained by the indwelling Spirit of Christ.

The natural conscience may sometimes check, but it can seldom restrain, except through the fear of temporal punishment, or worldly disgrace; and these

* Psa. i. 1. † 1 Pet. i. 5. ‡ Jer. xxxii. 40.

are often found feeble barriers against the violent assaults of natural corruption. So depraved is the heart. The new principle of grace in the believer, not only restrains from evil, but restores the soul to the image of God. Thus a person may know whether he be a child of God or not, by examining the habitual state of his mind and affections; by observing the inward workings of his heart; and watching over the continual motions of his spirit. Hence the Apostle draws this important conclusion: "They that are after the flesh do *mind* the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." So that, "to be carnally minded is death; but to the spiritually minded is life and peace."*

O blessed Saviour! be pleased to redeem my soul from the bondage of corruption, and bring me into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Implant in my heart the seed of holy desires. Ripen those seeds of grace. Cause them to shoot forth and bud, to blossom, and to bear fruit. Make me more humble, more holy, more weaned from the world, more devoted to thee, till thou shalt transplant me to the Paradise above.

Another year is now opening upon me. Where shall I be ere it close? in time, or in eternity?

To many thousands this year will be the last; yes, to many, on whose cheek now plays the hue of health, and in whose limbs vigour is transfused. What reason have I then to suppose, that the arrow of death may not be commissioned to lay me in the dust? Surely none. O! that my heart may be duly and deeply affected by the following truths:—

I AM A FALLEN CREATURE.

Blessed Lord! give me the deepest insight into myself. Make me to know, in some measure, the extent of my misery and corruption as a child of fallen Adam. Fully to know the desperate wickedness and

* Rom. viii. 5, 6.

deceitfulness of the heart, is thy prerogative. But oh! let me not be ignorant of my vileness. Let not pride and self-love blind the eyes of my mind; or cause me to fancy myself to be something when I am nothing; less than nothing, and vanity. Show me to myself, through the light of thy Holy Spirit shining upon thy own word of Truth. In that faithful mirror may I behold my natural state of guilt and misery, and while beholding, loathe myself with perfect loathing. O! cause me to sink down before thee in deepest self-abasement. Lord break my proud heart. Melt the stone that lies within me. Purge away the dross of sin, and make all new within; that my heart may become a temple, in which thou wilt condescend to dwell.

I AM A HELPLESS CREATURE.

As a person, who has fallen down a steep precipice, and broken his bones, cannot stand upright; so, through the fall of my first parents, I am totally unable to recover myself from the dreadful consequences of transgression.

The tenth article of the Church of England is most true in Christian experience. "The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good works to faith and calling upon God: wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable unto God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that will."

Lord teach me to renounce all self-dependence. In myself, I have no strength;* therefore, of myself I can do nothing to satisfy thy justice, or restore thy lost image in my soul. O! may I never, for one moment, make the vain attempt of appeasing thy wrath; or of appearing before thee, in the filthy rags of my own righteousness. Thy justice demands an

* Rom. v. 6.

infinite satisfaction; and thy holiness delights only in *unspotted* purity. But I cannot pay the least mite, nor present before thee a clean heart, being ignorant, guilty, polluted, and enslaved. Where, then, must I flee? To whom must I look for help, and succour? How shall I obtain present and everlasting salvation?

GOD IS LOVE.

O! delightful truth! O! heart-cheering consolation. Let it be carried round the globe. Let it be echoed from hill to hill, from shore to shore, till all nations catch the joyful sound, that "God is love,"* that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."†

Here, in this one truth, this precious gospel message, proclaimed by the Saviour of sinners himself, is contained all peace, and strength, hope, joy, purity, yea, heavenly glory. Only believe this sweet declaration, with a loving obedience; only receive Christ, through whom this salvation is procured; and all the promises which cluster on the living Vine are thy portion, O my soul, freely and fully given by the Father of mercies, through the Son of his love.

O Thou eternal Spirit of light and truth, proceeding from the Father and the Son, work this saving faith even now in my heart. O make me this day, which commences another year of my earthly existence, a true member of the mystical body of Christ, a regenerated member of his Church, a sheep of his fold. Take away the darkness of my mind, and shed a flood of light into my soul. Pluck my feet out of the net of Satan's temptations; and enable me to walk in the path of thy commandments. Give me to see the beauty of holiness, and to hunger and thirst after it, to discover the heinousness of sin, to flee from it, and abhor it.

* 1 John iv. 16. † John iii. 16.

If called into the furnace of affliction, be thou with me to support and comfort me. If led into the enjoyment of worldly blessings, do thou preserve me from the snares of prosperity. O ! grant that I may begin this year with earnest desires after Christ and his salvation, that, being kept by thy power from day to day, I may be continually waiting for the Saviour's coming, and rejoice, when his voice of mercy shall whisper to my soul: "Come up hither;"— "Enter into the joy of thy Lord."*

Jesus! I will praise thy name,
While my life and being last;
Thy rich mercies are the same,
Which saints enjoy'd in ages past;
Dying pilgrim here below,
'T is my bliss, Thy love to know.

With the lightning's rapid flight
All my moments hasten by;
Day is soon o'erspread with night;
Flowers of Spring do quickly die.
Jesus, in this land of woe,
Let me Thy salvation know.

Fleeting vapours are my days,
Life is but an airy dream;
As the sun's declining rays,
Or the constant ebbing stream.
Fix my heart on Thee alone,
Thee, the Church's Corner-Stone.

Thou, my kind redeeming Lord,
Wean my heart from earthly joy;
Change me by thy powerful word,
Every sin in me destroy.
Let my treasure ever be,
Safely hid, O Christ, in Thee.

Holy Spirit, Heavenly Fire,
Burn the hated dross within,

* Rev. iv. 1.; Matt. xxv. 21.

Kindle every pure desire,
Save me from indwelling sin.
Let my soul on Thee depend,
Faithful and Almighty Friend.

LXIX.—THE BELIEVER'S REVIEW OF HIS CHRISTIAN STATE.

"Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no."—Deut. viii. 2.

THOUSANDS live regardless of *the hand* that supports them. They revel amidst the bounties of Providence; and rebel against his chastening rod. They "regard not the work of the Lord," nor consider "the operation of his hands." "God is not in all their thoughts." Not so, the true believer in Jesus. In prosperity, he can say with David: "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over."* And with him, he can also say in adversity: "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me."†

In the Psalms of David, we find all the varied experience of a child of God. The mere religionist knows nothing of the internal workings of the renewed mind. The difference is indeed great, between the outward form, and the inward power of godliness. The former, whilst destitute of the latter, is like the body without the soul; it is a lifeless carcase. Hence we find David always breathing after the quickening influence of the Spirit. The hundred and nineteenth Psalm is full of these divine breathings. As David was a man after God's own heart,

* Psa. xxiii. 5. † Psa. cxix. 75.

so he was made well acquainted with his own heart. He abhorred the idols of the heathen. He never fell into the sin of idolatry; yet he could exclaim with grief: "My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word;"* and with brokenness of heart confess, "I have sinned against the Lord."†

This is the common complaint of all true Christians. They want an entire conformity to the mind of God. They pant after universal holiness. They labour to get their affections supremely fixed upon Christ and heaven. They long for the complete victory over indwelling sin, and the perishing vanities of the world. Yet, they find, to their inexpressible grief, that when they would do good, evil is present with them;‡ not indeed as a thing *indulged*, but as mixing itself with all their aims and desires, so that they are constrained to cry out, "Woe is me! for I am undone."§ "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"‖ They feel a force drawing them down to earth, when they would soar above.

This experience greatly humbles the Christian pilgrim, while travelling through the wilderness. He sees that he has no righteousness of his own; that of himself he can do nothing; and that it is of the Lord alone, that he has either righteousness or strength.

This conviction of inward pollution, unseen by the eye of man, drives him to the blood of sprinkling. It makes Christ unspeakably precious. He is fervent in supplication for the supply of the Spirit, through the intercession of his great High Priest; and feeling his inability to think one good thought, or exercise one holy affection, without the grace and power of Jesus, he sits daily at his feet, to hear his word, to receive out of his fulness, to imbibe his spirit, and to copy his example.

* Psa. cxix. 25. † 2 Sam. xii. 13. ‡ Rom. vii. 21, &c.
§ Isa. vi. 5. ‖ Rom. vii. 24.

Such is the experience and practice, not of one, but of all the faithful servants of Jehovah. They have many trials; for, "many are the afflictions of the righteous,"* but they have also many consolations. Thus writes St. Paul, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."†

O! that I may be found amongst these chosen vessels of the Lord. I have to mourn over deadness, lukewarmness, and earthly-mindedness, though, through grace, I abhor these evils: I am grieved that my heart is so cold, when God is so kind; yea, I am grieved, that I grieve so little. What a paradox is my experience! In the midst of conflict, this is my comfort; when I am sensible of my weakness, and lean upon Christ, then I am strong;—when I am tried, and trust wholly in the Lord, then I am supported;—when I am sorrowful, through manifold temptations, and look unto Jesus, then I am exceeding joyful. O! what a blessed religion is the religion of Jesus Christ, when it has its empire in the heart; when the Redeemer is enthroned in the affections; when the will is brought into a willing subjection to the Prince of Peace.

It is profitable to take a retrospective view of the path of life; to retrace the various movements of Providence; the many vicissitudes of this chequered scene. This will help to strengthen faith, as well as to deepen humility. Moses, in the book of Deuteronomy, records the Lord's mercies, and Israel's transgressions, to awaken the gratitude, and to promote the humiliation of the Church in the wilderness. David, in his songs of Zion, recapitulates the dealings of the Lord with his people, "that the generation to come might know them, even the children

* Psa. xxxiv. 19. † 2 Cor. i. 3, 4.

which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children: that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God; but keep his commandments."* How good it is, when the dealings of the Lord are handed down from generation to generation; when his praises are sung by children's children.

The review of our Christian state is both humbling and elevating. When we look at the rock whence we were hewn; and at the Rock on which we are placed, we may well exclaim, "What hath God wrought!" From the heart every true believer can say,—Blessed Lord, with deepest abasement of soul, I desire to approach thy divine Majesty. In myself, I have nothing but sin. In how many ways have I offended thee. My conscience testifieth against me. My own heart condemns me. When I contemplate thy Holiness, Justice, and Truth, must I not fear before Thee? But, in the midst of the throne, I behold "a Lamb slain;"† I hear a voice of mercy proceeding from it: "God is just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."‡ "Salvation is of the Lord."§ I behold, by this revelation of grace, a way of access opened to poor perishing sinners, through faith in the blood of the Lamb. Lord, give me faith in thy dear Son. Enable me to cast myself, without reserve, upon thy covenanted mercies in Christ Jesus. In him, alone, is eternal life. In him, is treasured up grace, mercy, and peace. O! for a heart to believe unto righteousness. This heart is thy gift, through the operation of the Holy Spirit. Thou knowest my wickedness, and wretchedness, my frailties and follies, my helplessness, and total alienation from thee, through original and actual transgression. Thou knowest from what height of happiness I am fallen; into what depth of misery I am plunged.

O! sovereign love,—O! matchless grace, which pitied me in my lost estate. To redeem my soul

* Psa. lxxviii. 6, 7. † Rev. v. 6. ‡ Rom. iii. 26.
§ Jonah ii. 9.

from hell, the Eternal Word becomes incarnate, bears my griefs, carries my sorrows, is wounded for my transgressions, is bruised for mine iniquities, and dies upon the cross, being made a curse for me. This is a mystery which heavenly minds cannot fathom; but which can be received into the heart by faith. How precious is saving faith. It is the hand which receives the gift of grace; the hand which places the crown on the head of Jesus, ascribing glory and honour to the Lamb which was slain.

Through faith, I am complete in Christ. Through faith in his blood, all my sins are forgiven. Through faith in his righteousness, I have peace with God. But when I review my Christian privileges, I must put to my heart, an all-important question: Have I true faith, "the faith of God's elect?" Jesus hath said, "By their fruits ye shall know them."* "The tree is known by his fruit."† Here, then, is an unerring criterion, whereby to form a judgment of my real state in the sight of God. I must, then, examine myself whether I be in the faith.

What are the fruits which I habitually bring forth? What is the general tenour of my thoughts? When sinful thoughts arise, do I cherish them? Am I fond of retaining them? Or, can I say, in sincerity, I hate every sinful thought, affection, and desire.

Have I obtained the mastery over my imaginations, so as to be able to suppress them when contrary to purity and holiness? Alas! they struggle to gain the mastery. Like a bold enemy, they rally again and again, till I am sometimes ready to cry out with David: "I shall perish one day by the hand of Saul."‡ But, at these seasons, I find prayer a never-failing weapon, which puts to flight the armies of the aliens; and thus proves the truth of that gracious promise: "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."§

* Matt. vii. 20. † Matt. xii. 33. ‡ 1 Sam. xxvii. 1.
§ Psa. l. 15.

Have I delight in communion with God, in secret retirement, meditation, reading the Scriptures, and prayer? Can I say with humility, I do delight in these seasons of retirement, when, apart from the noisy world, I can hold sweet intercourse with the Father of spirits?

But alas! I do not always enjoy that sweet and soul-enlivening communion with God, which I long and pray for. I have to lament over much unbelief, coldness of affection, and wandering thoughts. Still, though often discouraged, through the workings of indwelling sin, I would not give up these secret retirements. I am convinced, that no true happiness can be found, but in God. No salvation, but in Christ. No strength to resist sin, and grow in heavenly-mindedness, but through the Spirit. For this reason, Satan tries hard to drive me from a throne of grace, well knowing the power of prayer:

> "For Satan trembles when he sees,
> The weakest saint upon his knees."

I will therefore wait upon God, trusting to his promise, that he will never leave me, nor forsake me;* but cause the light of his countenance to shine upon me, that I may be filled with joy unspeakable, and full of glory:† and be able to say, like Peter, at another manifestation, "It is good for me to be here."‡

AM I CAREFUL OF MY WORDS?

Through divine grace, I have been preserved from corrupt conversation, from lightly using the sacred name of God, or venting unkind and uncharitable expressions, in spleen or anger. But, oh! what a load of guilt lies upon me for "*idle words*," those multiplied sins of the tongue. Though cheerful

* See Gen. xxviii. 15.; Deut. xxxi. 6, 8.; 1 Chron. xxviii. 30.; Heb. xiii. 5.

† See Psa. iv. 6., Acts ii. 28.; 1 Pet. i. 8.

‡ See Matt. xvii. 4.; Mark ix. 5.; Luke ix. 33.

conversation is innocent, when it does not degenerate into levity, yet the Christian has need to keep the door of his lips, when he remembers the words of his Lord: "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment: for by thy words thou shalt be *justified*, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."* From this declaration of Christ, it is evident that *words* are *declarative* of our state. "By thy words thou shalt be justified." St. James expresses the same of works: "By works a man is justified."† It is the same as if they had said, "The tree is known by his fruit." The *meritorious* cause of justification is the righteousness of Christ, apprehended by faith, which is the *instrument*; while good works are the fruit which evidence and declare our being justified in the sight of God; for, "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."‡

Surely, I have cause to cry out with the publican: "God be merciful to me a sinner."§ If I were to be judged, only for the words which I have spoken from childhood to old age, oh! how could I appear before the all-seeing, heart-searching God? David felt the force of this truth, "Thou God seest me," when he penned his beautiful Psalm: "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising; thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a *word in my tongue*, but, lo, O Lord, thou *knowest it altogether*."‖

Do I love, when suitable opportunities occur, to talk upon religious subjects, not controversially, but experimentally and practically? Am I desirous, at all times, to render conversation profitable and instructive, good to the use of edifying? Is Jesus, that endearing name, often on my tongue, not from mere profession, or vain display, but from a heart-

* Matt. xii. 36, 37. † Chap. ii. 24. ‡ James ii. 26.
§ Luke xviii. 13. ‖ Psa. cxxxix. 1—4.

felt love to Him, whom angels worship, and whom saints adore? "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."* Can we imagine St. Paul to have been in the circle of Christian believers for weeks and months, and never to have dwelt upon the theme nearest his heart, *the dying love of Christ*, except when engaged in the act of *public preaching?* And yet, alas! how seldom do some ministers of the gospel make Jesus the Alpha and the Omega of their discourses, either publicly, or, like the Apostle, from "*house to house.*"† May not Jesus say to such, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left *thy first love?*"‡ Or, rather, "because thou art destitute of *the first love*, which was manifested by the warm-hearted members of my primitive Church?"

Both ministers and people have cause for deep humiliation on this account. "Them that honour me," saith the Almighty, "I will honour."§ "If we deny him, he also will deny us."‖ Lord, make me faithful. Preserve me from false-heartedness and faint-heartedness. Keep me from the extremes of vainglory, and the fear of man. Clothe me with humility.

Do I seize opportunities for speaking a word in season; either of reproof, exhortation, or encouragement? A consciousness of my own depravity, mixed with an undue feeling of shame, often keeps me from being faithful in the performance of this duty. To speak about Christ to worldly characters, is difficult; but not impracticable, when the truth is spoken in love.

Nothing wins its way to the heart so much as genuine Christian love, which is ever clothed with humility. It often disarms the violence of opposition; and disposes the worldling to listen to the voice of reproof; yea, even to confess the error of his way.

* Matt. xii. 34.; Luke vi. 45.

† Acts xx. 20. ‡ See Rev. ii. 4. § 1 Sam. ii. 30.

‖ 2 Tim. ii. 12.

O! that I may have grace to perform this, and every other self-denying duty; leaving consequences with God.

HOW ARE MY ACTIONS IN GENERAL?

If there be none that are openly vicious and immoral; or, such as bring a scandal on religion; or, make the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme; to God be all the praise. I may be punctually observant of all outward duties, which respect the sanctuary and the family; be chiefly associated with religious characters; be actively engaged in promoting religious institutions; and yet be destitute of love to Christ, without which, all my doings are nothing worth. It is the principle, which gives the quality to the action. This our Lord has clearly declared in the sermon on the Mount.*

Let me examine into this matter. When I perform the various commanded duties, is it from a desire to be seen of men? Or, does it spring from the force of education, habit, and custom? Or, from a change of sentiment, through the influence of the circle in which I move? If so, I am a tree without fruit.

True faith worketh by love; love to Christ and love to holiness. It is most important, that this be well established in the mind; that this point be settled on Scripture grounds. If I perform my duties from a principle of love to God, and delight in Him, then I have a clear scriptural evidence that *I am his*; for if I love God, it is because he hath first loved me.† Then I have a clear proof, that I am interested in the work of Christ's redemption; for love is the fruit of faith, and the solid evidence of my acceptance with God; for whom he justifies, them he also glorifies;‡ and what is our glory, but to be like him here in holiness, and to dwell with him in glory everlasting.

* See Matt. v., vi., vii. † 1 John iv. 19.
‡ Rom. viii. 30.

Surely these will be the meditations and aspirations of every true believer in Jesus.

Blessed Lord! create in me these holy, heavenly desires, and endeavours to please thee. Kindle the flame of love, and cause it to burn continually on the altar of my heart. Let it be like the fire of the sanctuary, which was never to go out.* Increase my faith and love, my hope and desire, my ardent longings after thee. O make me sincere, on every review of my Christian state and character. Make my heart pure; freed from unhallowed affections, and sinful imaginations. Let my conversation be pious and profitable; my actions be agreeable to thy will, in every relation and department of life. Implant right principles in my soul, and keep me, through the merits of Christ, and the grace of the Spirit, to thy everlasting kingdom.

LXX.—A GRATEFUL RETROSPECT OF UNDESERVED MERCIES.

"How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand."—Psa. cxxxix. 17, 18.

It is delightful to contemplate what the blessed Jesus is to his believing people. He manifests himself to them in the most condescending manner, by using those similitudes which are level to the humblest understanding. Truly, his words are spirit, and they are life. He spake as never man spake.†

I.—"I am the *Vine*, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."‡

* Lev. vi. 13. † John vi. 63.; vii. 46.

‡ John xv. 5.

Here I learn, that as the branch receives all its sap from the parent stem, by which union, its fruitfulness is produced; so my soul can only bring forth the fruits of righteousness, by being grafted into Christ by faith. A branch cut off, lies withered on the ground: and, severed from Christ, I shall be barren also.

II.—"I am the *Bread of Life:* he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."*

David blesses God for the gift of "bread which strengtheneth man's heart."† If bread be called the staff of life, for its nourishing quality, how precious is the bread from heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ! He is indeed the bread of life. He alone, can give life to the world, to all who come unto him by faith; for whosoever believeth shall be saved.

III. "I am the *Door:* by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."‡

As the sheepfolds in Judea were enclosed, to keep out beasts of prey, it was important that they should be well guarded.

Within such a protected sheepfold, the flock could repose in safety. Jesus is the only door of admittance into the gospel-fold. By faith in him, I am admitted into his Church, and form one of the sheep of his pasture, to whom he kindly says: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."§ The roaring lion of the wilderness, who is ever going about seeking whom he may devour,‖ cannot invade this sacred enclosure, for He, who is the door, is the Omnipotent Saviour.

IV. "I am the *good Shepherd:* the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."**

* John vi. 35. † Psa. civ. 15. ‡ John x. 9.
§ Luke xii. 32. ‖ See 1 Pet. v. 8. ** John x. 11.

Jesus is not only the door into the sheep-fold, but also the good shepherd of the sheep. He is the "All, and in All" to his people. Whilst the hireling fleeth, and leaveth his flock to the danger of the wolf, Jesus giveth his life for the sheep, that they may be saved from every evil, spiritual and eternal. Happy are the sheep of his pasture, who hear his voice and follow him. To such he will give eternal life, for none can pluck them out of his hands.

O! how great is the love and care of the good Shepherd. He died, that we might live; and ever liveth to make intercession for us.* He wills the salvation of his believing people. He seeks them, he saves them, he sanctifies them, he glorifies them. O! that we may rise to the full assurance of faith and hope.

V. "I am *the Way*, and *the Truth*, and *the Life;* no man cometh unto the Father but by me."†

As a pilgrim, travelling through a dreary desert, I need a guide to direct me. I perceive various roads branching out on the right hand and on the left, but into which shall I turn? Which of them will lead me to the city of Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem? I see a guide post, on which is written: "This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left."‡ While reading, I hear a voice: "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."§ I ask for direction, I entreat the Lord himself to guide me into the way wherein I should go; he hears my prayer; "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Oh! what a blessing! Jesus is both the way, and the guide to heaven.

* Heb. vii. 25. † John xiv. 6. ‡ Isa. xxx. 21. § Jer. vi. 16.

VI. "I am *the Light of the world:* he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."*

What a glorious revelation is this! Jesus is the Sun of Righteousness. His bright beams illuminate his Church. As it was of old, so it is now. In the land of Goshen, the children of Israel had light in their dwellings, while the Egyptians were wrapt in darkness.† The members of Christ's true Church are now enlightened by the Spirit, while the unbelieving members of the visible Church are walking in darkness; for he, and only he that *followeth Christ*, "shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

VII. "I am the *Resurrection and the Life:* he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die."‡

O! how rich are the promises of Christ! While a sojourner upon earth, if a true believer in the Son of God, I am a fruitful branch in *the Vine;* I am nourished by *the Bread of Life;* I am admitted by *the Door* into the sheepfold, the true Church; I am protected and saved by *the good Shepherd;* I am led into the true and *living Way* to the Father; I am enlightened by Jesus, *the Light of the world*, to see and avoid the dangers which surround me. All this is vouchsafed to me while travelling Zionward; but, I must die; my body must return to the dust, and my spirit to him who gave it. Is all then ended? No. Jesus is *the Resurrection* and *the Life;* he will re-animate my sleeping dust; he will re-unite my soul to my body made spiritual§ and incorruptible;‖ and, he will give me eternal life. There is the climax of blessedness, the fulness of glory.

How precious are these *beautiful sayings of Jesus.* The more I meditate upon them, the more

* John viii. 12. † Exod. x. 23. ‡ John xi. 25, 26.
§ 1 Cor. xv. 44. ‖ 1 Cor. xv. 42.

of richness and beauty I discover in them. When I take a retrospective view of my mercies, I see, that from a child, baptised in his name, these blessings were freely offered to me in the gospel; and, that from the moment I truly believed with the heart unto righteousness, they became my portion, my treasure, my consolation. I cannot sufficiently praise the Giver of all good, the God of my life and of my salvation, for such unspeakable mercy, for such unsearchable riches of his grace.

O! that my life may be one continued course of loving obedience, and believing reliance on the faithfulness and truth of God. May I, from henceforth, show my faith by my works; and my election in Christ, by being "holy, and without blame before him in love."*

O! my soul, praise the Lord with a song, and magnify him with thanksgiving. Tell of his salvation from day to day; for He is good, and his mercy endureth for ever. O! how great is his goodness towards them that fear him; how transcendent his mercy towards the children of men. There is no end of his loving-kindness. It is inexhaustible; it is everlasting! Sing, then, the praises of thy God, O my soul, for it well becometh a redeemed sinner to be thankful. Meditate continually on his excellent greatness, for such meditation is sweet. Rejoice in his salvation, for he has commanded his gospel to be preached to *every creature*, and hath declared, that *whosoever* believeth in him shall be saved.†

When a take a retrospective view of my undeserved mercies, I must bless my God, that I was born in a Christian land, where the light of the glorious gospel shines around me with meridian splendour. I might have been the offspring of some poor Hottentot, or wild Otaheitan savage, ignorant of God, of Christ, and of heaven; sunk in all the sensualities of a debased idolatry. How, then, can I sufficiently admire the mercy of God in casting my

* Eph. i. 4. † Mark xvi. 15, 16.

lot in this favoured island. Truly "the lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage."* I hear the sound of the Sabbath bells calling me to hear the sweet sounds of the gospel of Christ. I am blessed with the faithful preaching of Christ crucified, with the precious Bible, *released from its fetters*, by our martyred Reformers. Millions of my perishing fellow sinners have none of these things. Even in Christian lands, professedly so called, the bells may sound, but they call to the rites of superstition, or to the preaching of a dead morality. But, O! my soul, remember, yes, remember, that as thy privileges are great, so is thy responsibility. Never forget the doom of Chorazin and Bethsaida.† St. Peter felt all the force of his Lord's words when he wrote, respecting backsliders and apostates: "If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." The hearts of such characters were never renewed, their natures were never changed. This they proved by their return to the propensities of their *natural hearts*; for thus added St. Peter: "It is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his *own vomit* again; and, The sow that was washed, to *her wallowing* in the mire."‡ The sow, though *washed, was a sow still.* The outward washing could not change the inward propensity of the animal. Is it not so with multitudes of baptised persons? Outward reformation must never be confounded with inward regeneration.

St. Paul alludes to the same awful characters in his Epistle to the Hebrews: "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three

* Psa. xvi. 6. † Matt. xi. 21. ‡ 2 Pet. ii. 20—22.

witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was *sanctified*, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"* "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall *fall away*, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."†

O! how we should dread every approach to final apostacy. "For if we sin *wilfully* after that we have received *the knowledge of the truth*, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries."‡

When St. Paul says of the despiser of the blood of the covenant, "wherewith he was *sanctified;*" may he not allude to the *ordinance of baptism*, whereby the individual was *sanctified* or *set apart* to sacred uses, like the vessels of the temple? Had such an one been *truly renewed* by the Spirit of God, he would have been kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.—See Heb. vi. 9—12., where the Apostle assures his beloved converts, that he was persuaded better things of them, and things that accompanied *salvation*, though he thus spake.

I would then ask: Are all those *true* Christians, who are born in a Christian country? Are all those *born again of the Spirit*, who have been admitted by baptism unto the visible Church? Are all those the *real* disciples of Jesus, who attend his preached word? Alas! alas! many a heathen heart dwells in the bosom of baptised Christians. What then is my state and character? Before men, I

* Heb. x. 28, 29. † Heb. vi. 4—6.

‡ Heb. x. 26, 27.

may be esteemed religious; but what will this avail, since He that judgeth me is the Lord. "For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh *on the heart.*"*

Surely I have cause to bless God if he have brought me to the *saving knowledge* of Christ as my Saviour, my Intercessor, my Righteousness, my Hope, my Refuge, and my Trust. The Rock on which I can securely build. The Friend in whom I can safely confide. The Fountain of supply for all my needs. I never can sufficiently admire this abundant grace, vouchsafed to one so worthless, when justice might have consigned me to the burning wrath of an offended God.

Lord, why is this? I search, but cannot find the cause *in myself.* I contemplate thine own Eternal Love, and there I reach the Fountain of all my mercies. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee."† Surely mercy and truth have followed me all the days of my pilgrimage, like the waters in the wilderness, which cheered and refreshed the Israelites of old. As they drank of that spiritual Rock which followed them, (and that rock was Christ,) so have I been blessed with the living water from my crucified Lord, smitten for me.

As mountains rise above mountains, so do my mercies. On every side, I see blessings rise. To have Agur's *wish* fulfilled, is a favour of no ordinary kind. He well knew the danger of extremes, when he asked a gracious Providence to lead him in the *middle* path. "Two things I have required of thee; deny me them not before I die; Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither *poverty* nor *riches;* feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."‡

* 1 Sam. xvi. 7. † Jer. xxxi. 3. ‡ Prov. xxx. 7—9.

If a believer in Jesus, my happiness will be increased by living near to him, by living to his glory. May humility and love ever dwell in my heart; then I shall be happy in all the changing scenes of life. If called to ascend the hill of prosperity, or to traverse the valley of adversity; if blessed with health, or depressed with sickness; if carried to old age, or cut off by early death: all will be well, if Jesus be my Saviour, and my Friend.

It is profitable to consider what I *deserve*, and what I *enjoy*, to awaken self-abasement, and gratitude.

If the righteous Lord were to deal with me according to my deserts, I should at this moment be under the rack of excruciating pain: or, under the pressure of most abject poverty: or, under the destitution of every friend to comfort me: or, under the sting of an awakened, guilty conscience; thus feeling the foretaste of eternal woe.

If thus dealt with in strictest justice, Death would receive his commission to hurl my affrighted soul into the gulf of endless misery, there to remain an everlasting monument of the vengeance of a holy God. All short of this is mercy

Do I enjoy a portion of health? It is all mercy. Am I undergoing a *sanctified* affliction? It is all mercy. Do I partake of the bounties of Providence? It is all mercy. Do I possess dear, affectionate friends? It is all mercy. Do I experience the love of God in Christ, pardoning my sins, and purifying my heart? O! this is mercy, beyond the power of language to praise or to express. Rejoice, O my soul, in such a heavenly Father, who thus spares and blesses his rebellious child. Rejoice in such a Saviour, whose intercession for thee is incessant and prevailing. Rejoice in such a Comforter, whose gracious work it is to snatch thee as a brand out of the burning.

O! that I could be more and more grateful for those mercies which I enjoy. Let every murmuring

thought be gone. Lord make me all praise, all gratitude, all love. May sin increase in hatefulness, as I increase in the knowledge of thy goodness. Enlighten my mind to know myself and thee. Increase this salutary knowledge, that, from a deep abiding sense of my own depravity of nature, I may be led with greater earnestness to flee into the ark of safety —Jesus Christ, the righteous.

"My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise."—Psa. lvii. 7.

"I will extol thee, my God, O King; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever."—Psa. cxlv. 1.

"Thou art my God, and I will praise thee; thou art my God, I will exalt thee."—Psa. cxviii. 28.

"The Lord is my strength and song, and is become my salvation."—Psa. cxviii. 14.

"Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable."—Psa. cxlv. 3.

Thus sang the sweet Psalmist of Israel. O that I could seize his harp and strike a chord in unison with his.

Glory be to thee, O Father, Son, and Spirit. To Thee be ascribed, by angels and men, all blessing, and honour, and glory, and power. Thy name alone is excellent, and thy glory above the earth and heaven. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Hallelujah."*

Soon shall I bid this world adieu!
And enter soon the world above;
Th' eternal day bursts on my view,
The radiance of eternal love.

Weep not, ye friends, nor mourn my loss,
My purest joys are all to come;
When far remov'd from every cross,
I reach my sweet, my heavenly home.

* Psa. cvi. 48.

The shadows fly, the glorious light
  Bespeaks the Holy City nigh ;
Behold the day excludes the night,
  My soul, is this Eternity ?

The first-born form a sacred train
  Around the Lamb, whom they adore ;
While, safe beneath his gentle reign,
  They chaunt his praises evermore.

I fly to join the victor's cry ;
  To taste their transports, all divine !
I fly to share the bliss on high,
  And in my Saviour's glory shine.

Release me now, ye heavy chains ;
  Burden of flesh, drop down, and die ;
Ye piercing griefs,—ye earthly pains,
  From you for ever do I fly.

Come, then, quickly, Jesus ! Come !

A. PICKARD, PRINTER, LEEDS.